

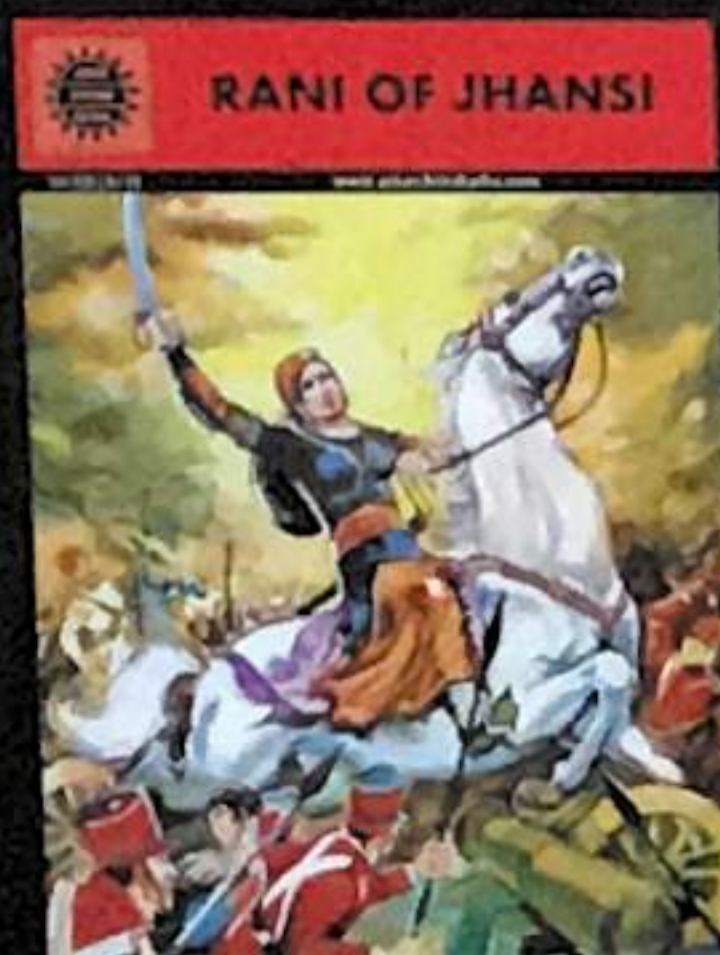
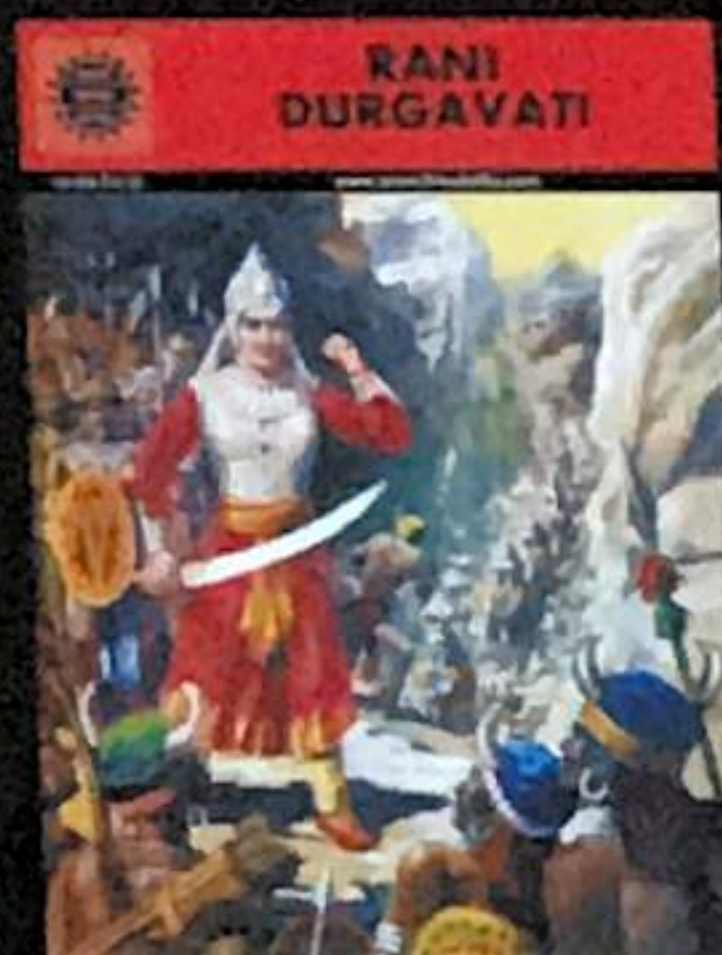
CHENNAMMA OF KELADI

There was great consternation in the court of Keladi, when the king married a commoner.

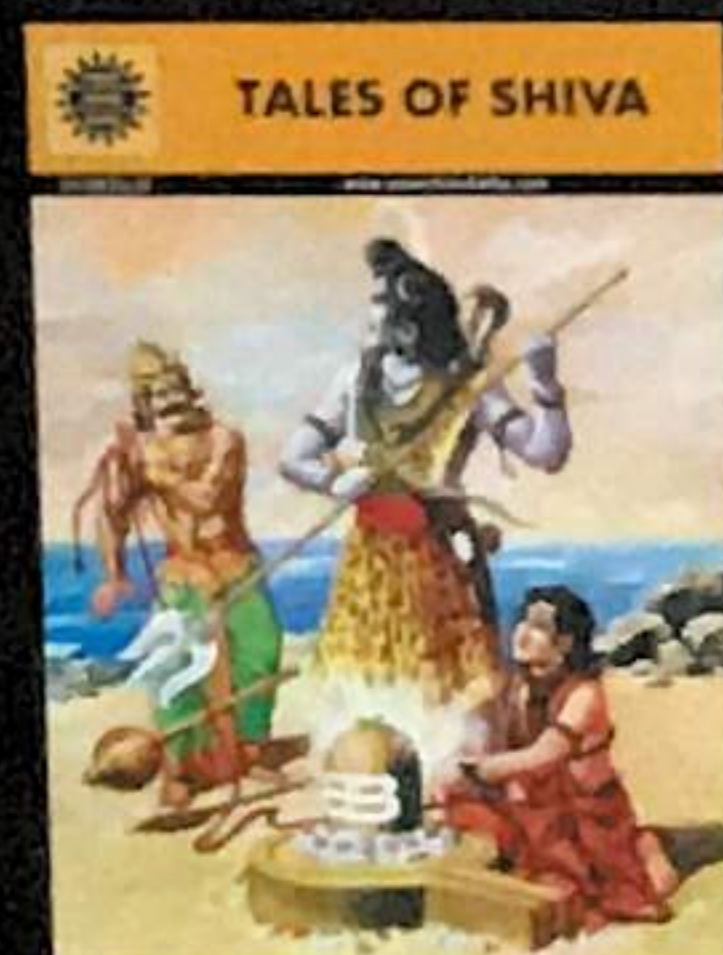
But Chennamma, the merchant's daughter, proved to be a born queen. She became an expert rider and archer. She also took great interest in the governing of the kingdom. When a scheming minister poisoned and killed the king, Chennamma was forced to take over as ruler.

Before she could calm the troubled kingdom, Keladi came under attack from the powerful armies of Bijapur. Undaunted, Chennamma sold her jewellery to finance the battle. Then she marched out to meet the invaders, at the head of her army.

OTHER ACK BRAVEHEARTS:



ALSO LOOK FOR:



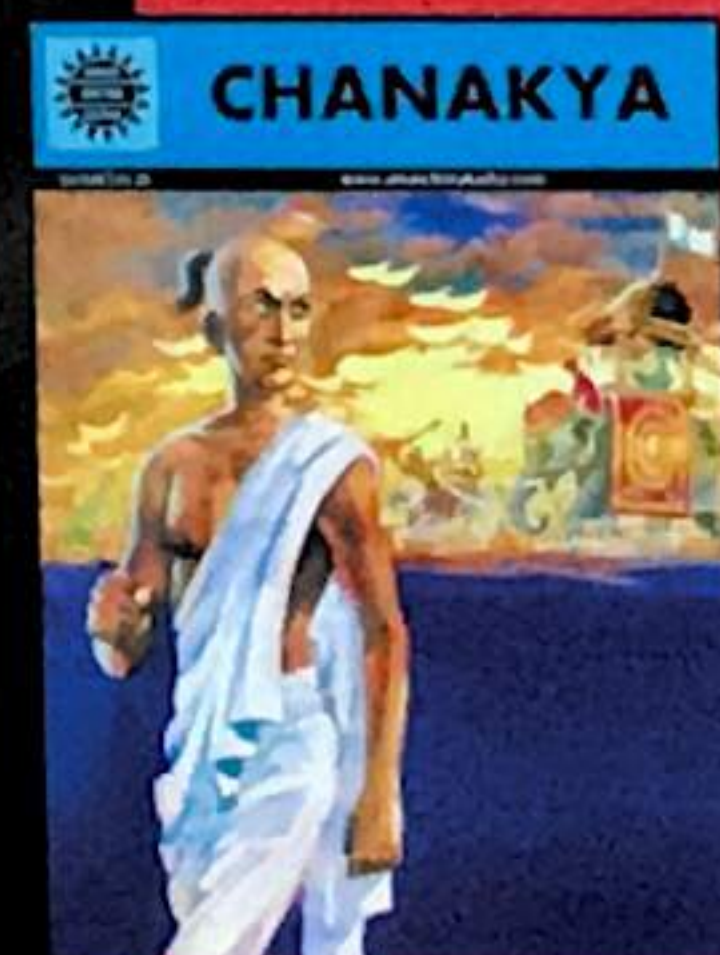
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- NARAYAN MURTHY, CHIEF MENTOR, INFOSYS

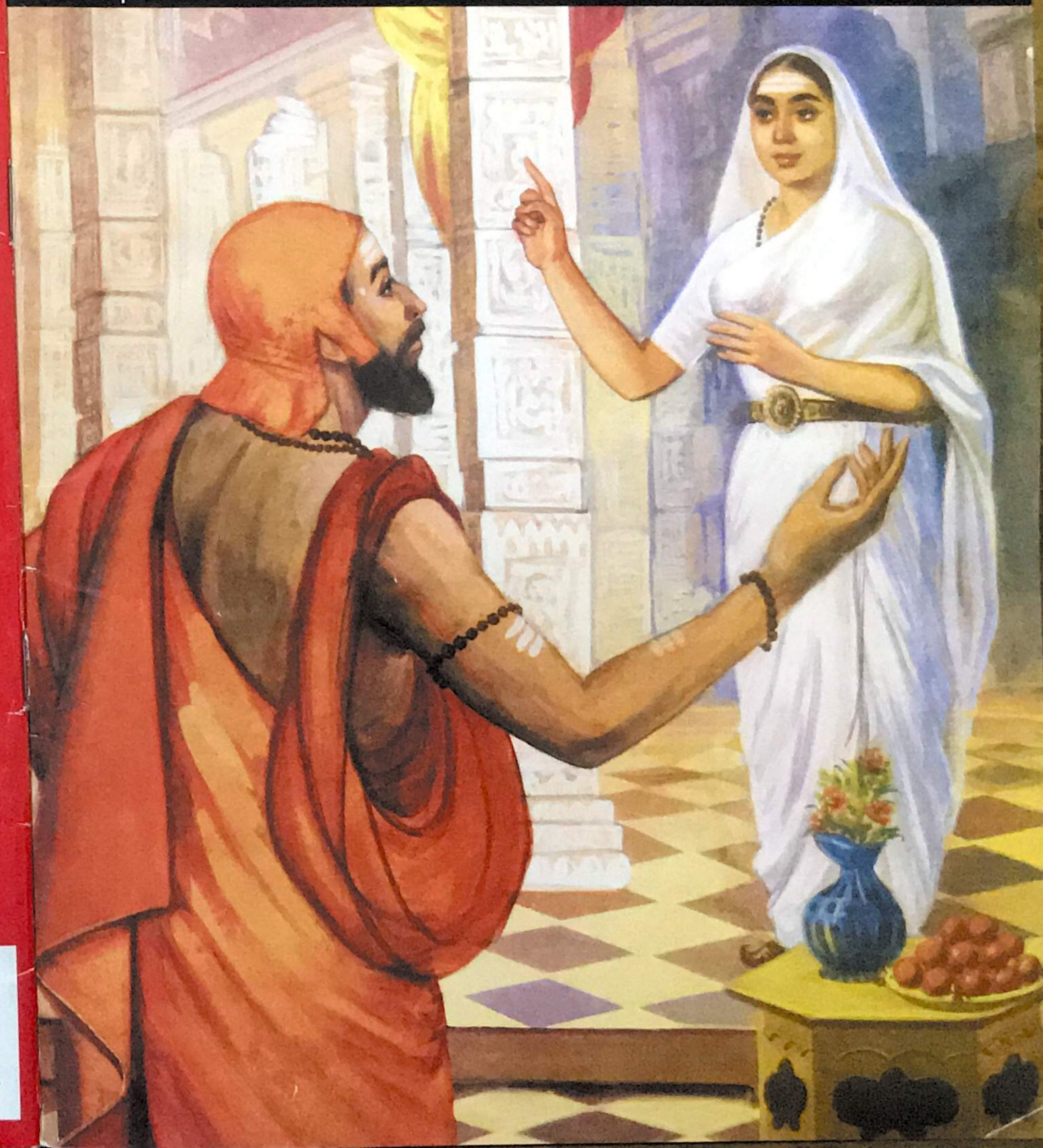
BRAVEHEARTS



CHENNAMMA OF KELADI

THE QUEEN WHO DEFIED AURANGAZEB

Vol 793 | ₹50

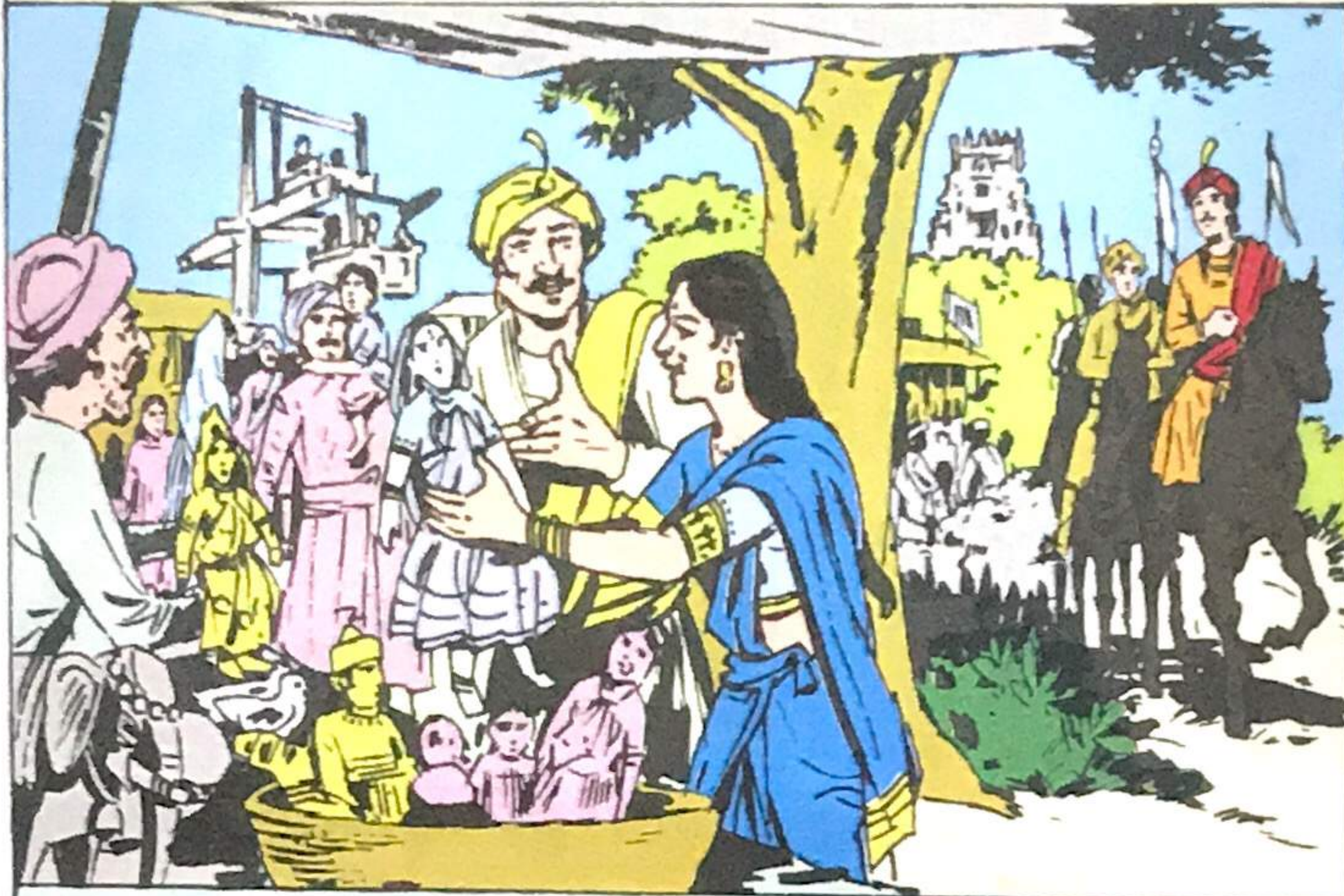


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CHENNAMMA OF KELADI

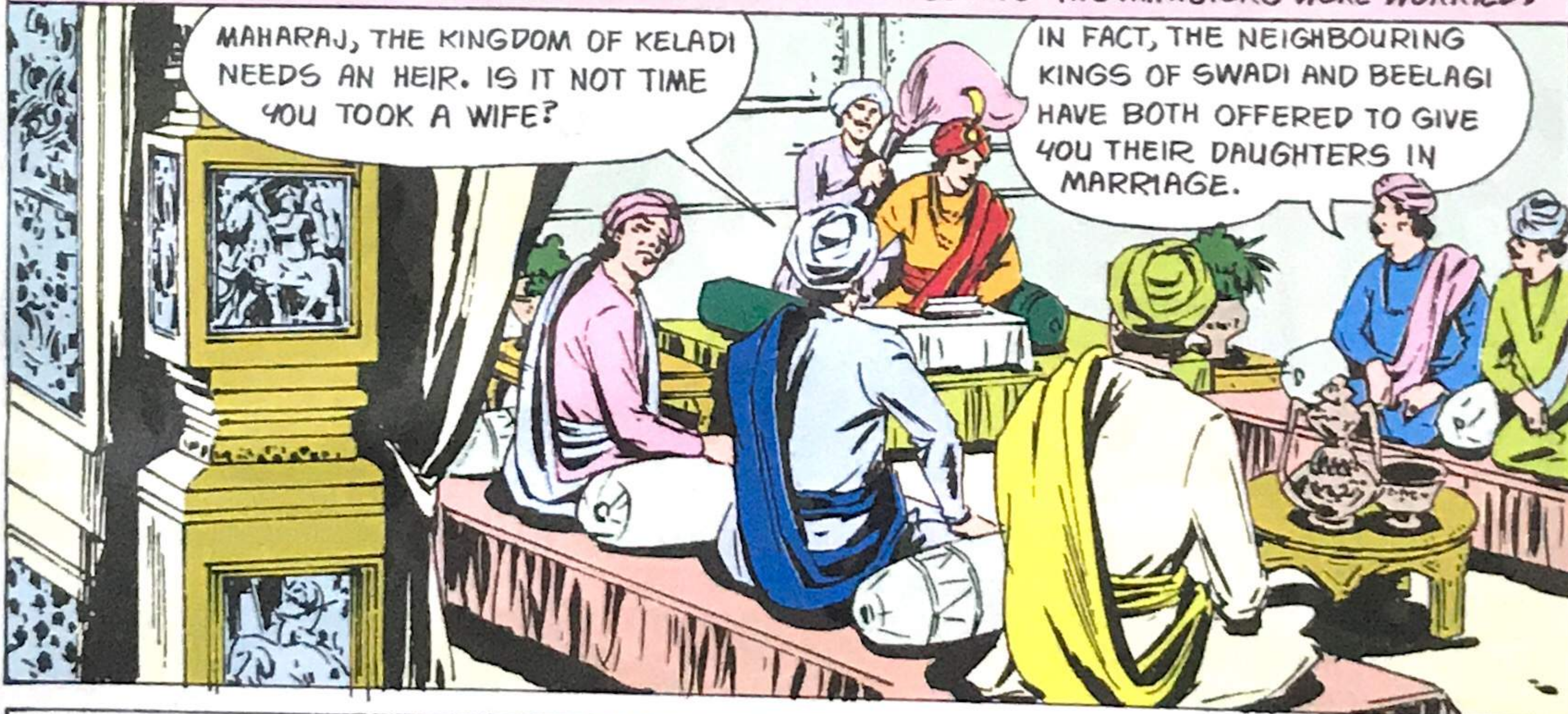


THE YEAR WAS 1663. SOMASHEKHARA NAYAK, KING OF KELADI*, WAS AT THE RAMESHWAR FAIR. IT WAS THERE THAT HE SAW HER.

LATER, AT THE PALACE IN BIDANUR, THE KING WAS AT A MEETING. HIS MINISTERS WERE WORRIED.

MAHARAJ, THE KINGDOM OF KELADI NEEDS AN HEIR. IS IT NOT TIME YOU TOOK A WIFE?

IN FACT, THE NEIGHBOURING KINGS OF SWADI AND BEELAGI HAVE BOTH OFFERED TO GIVE YOU THEIR DAUGHTERS IN MARRIAGE.



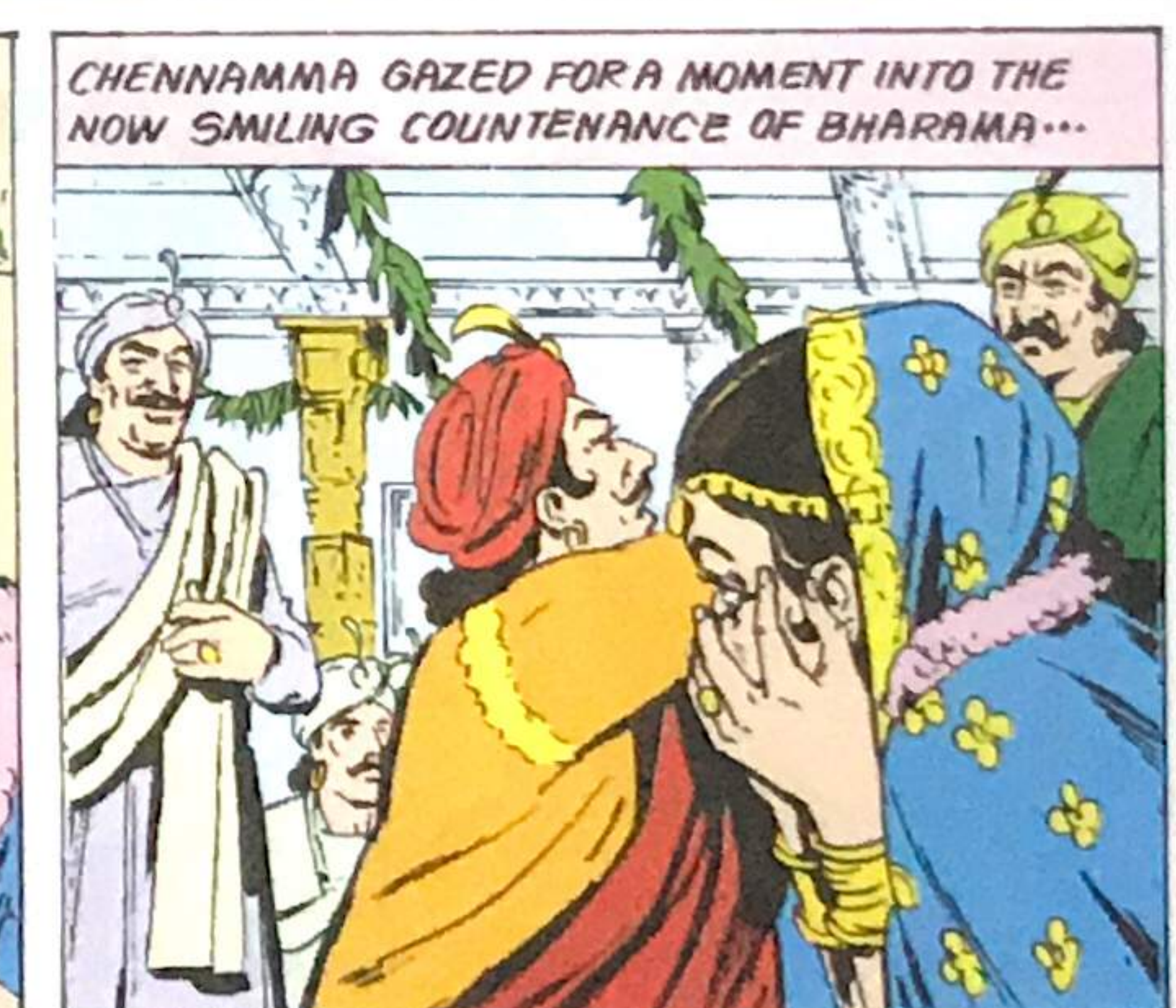
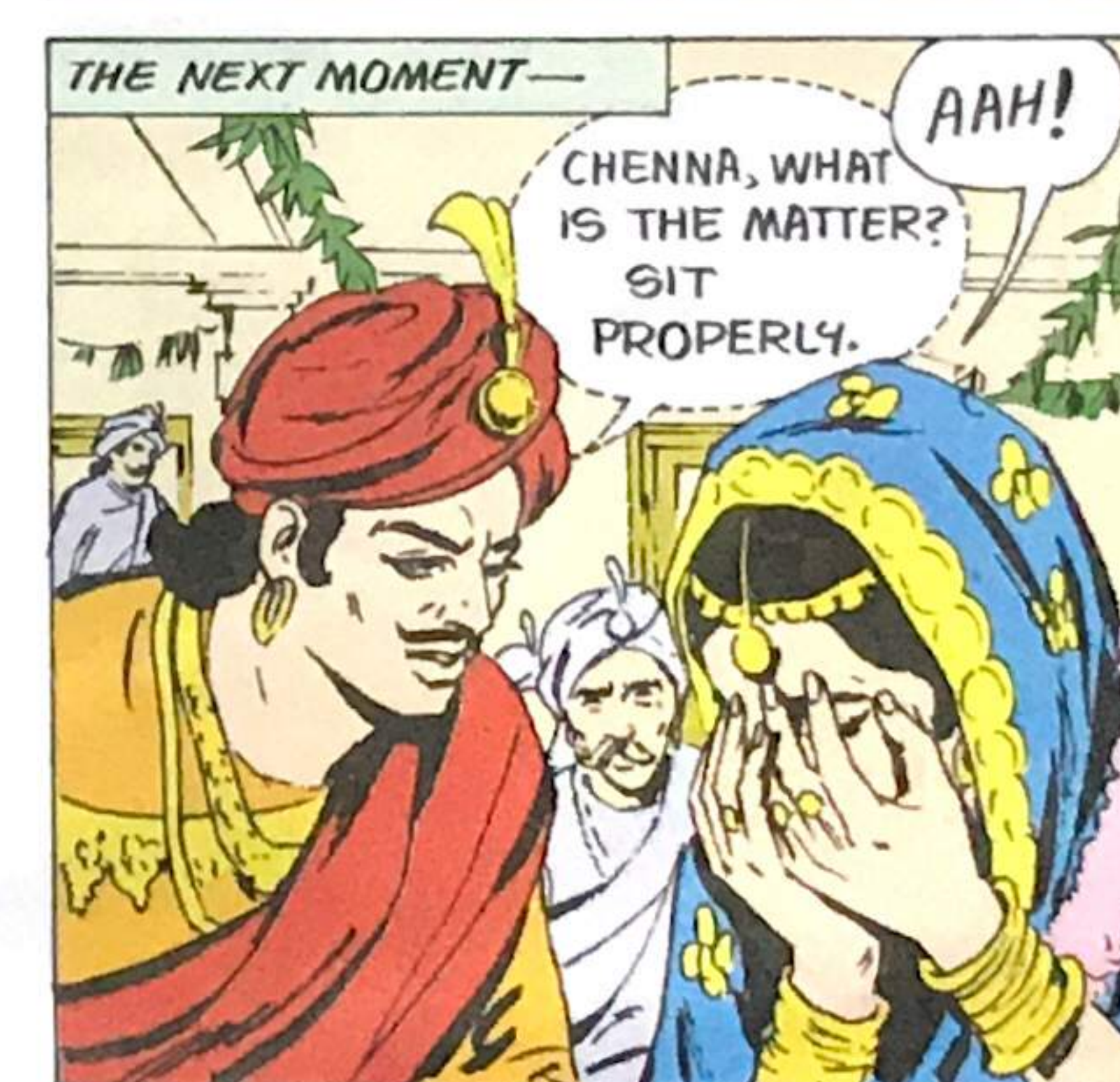
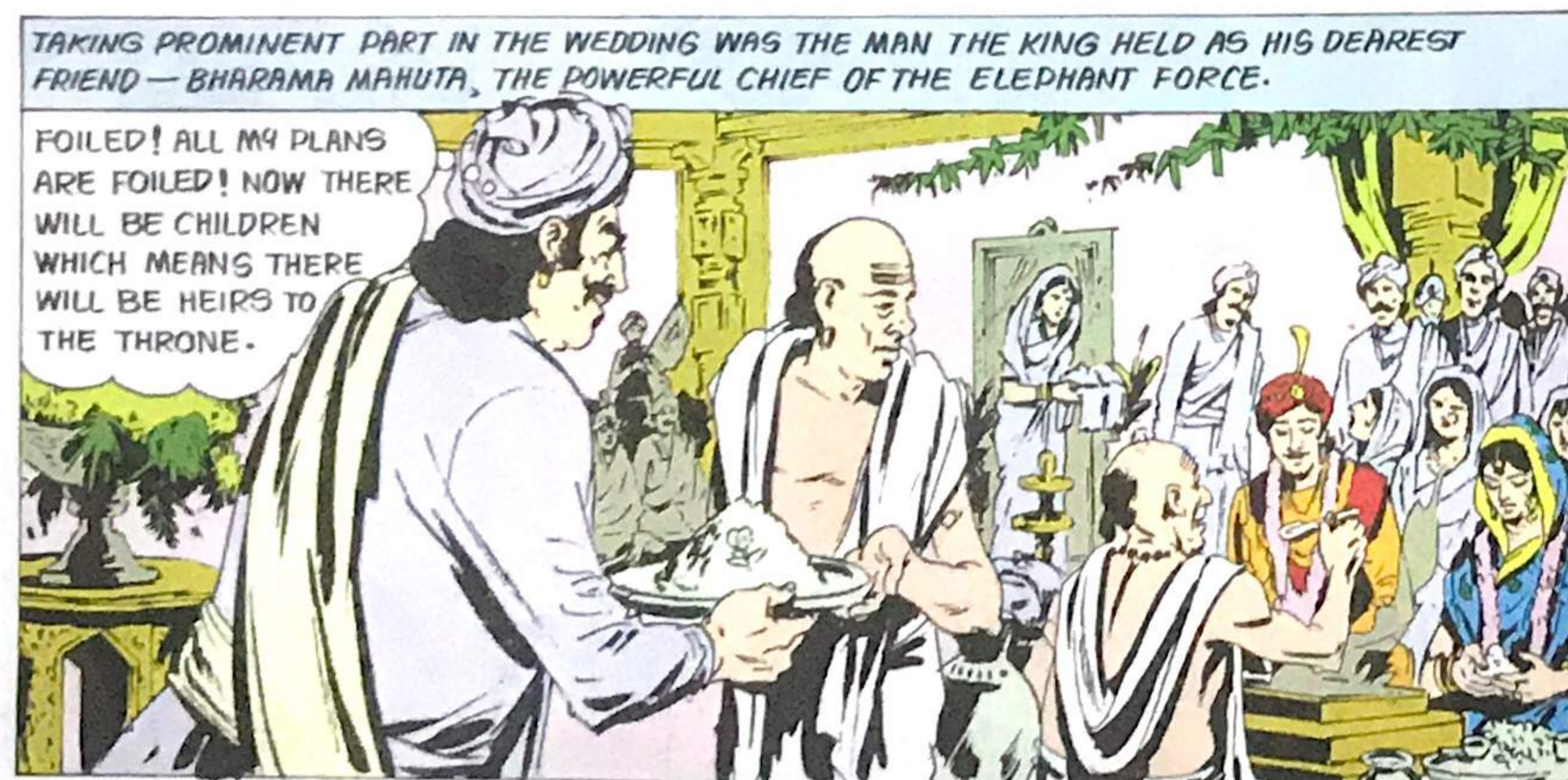
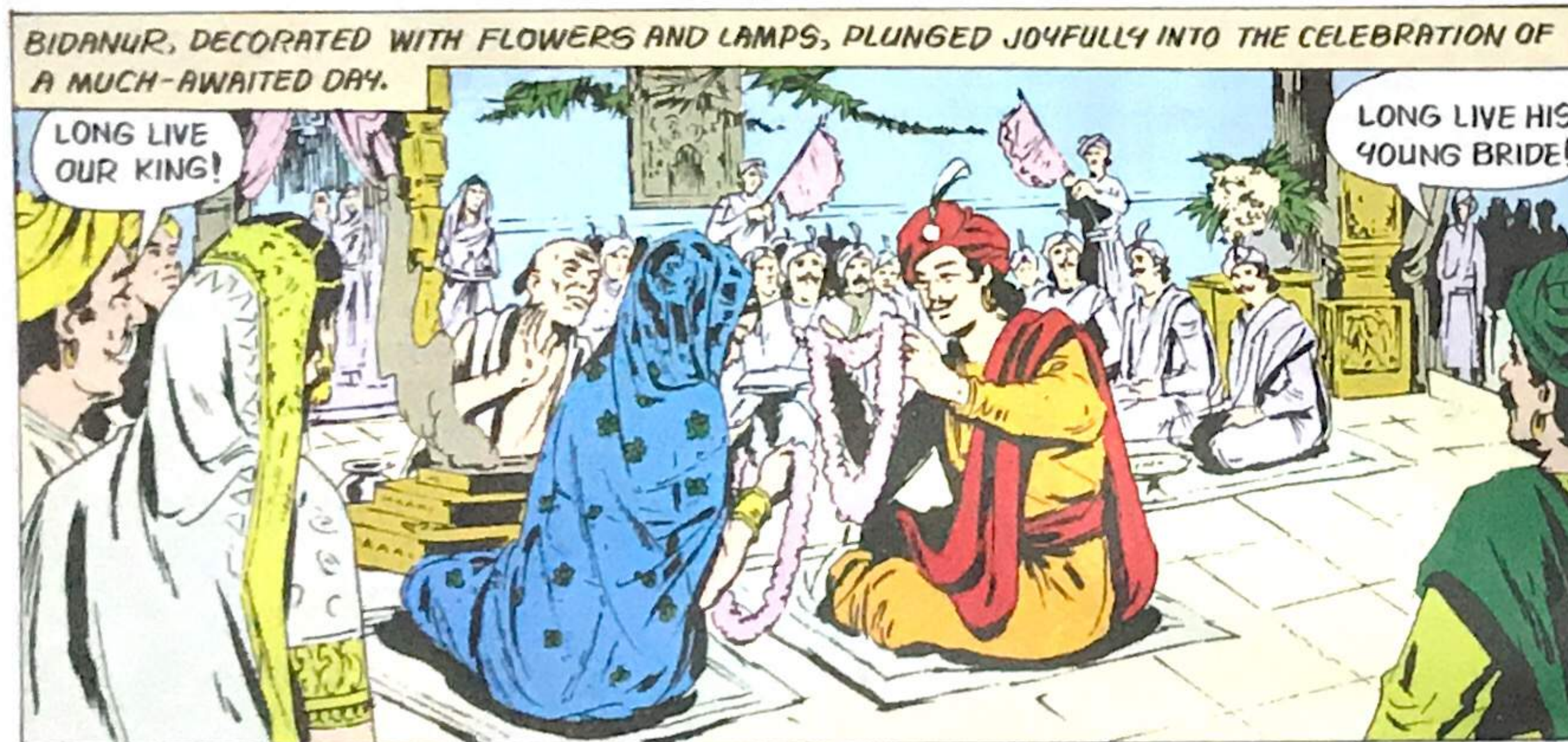
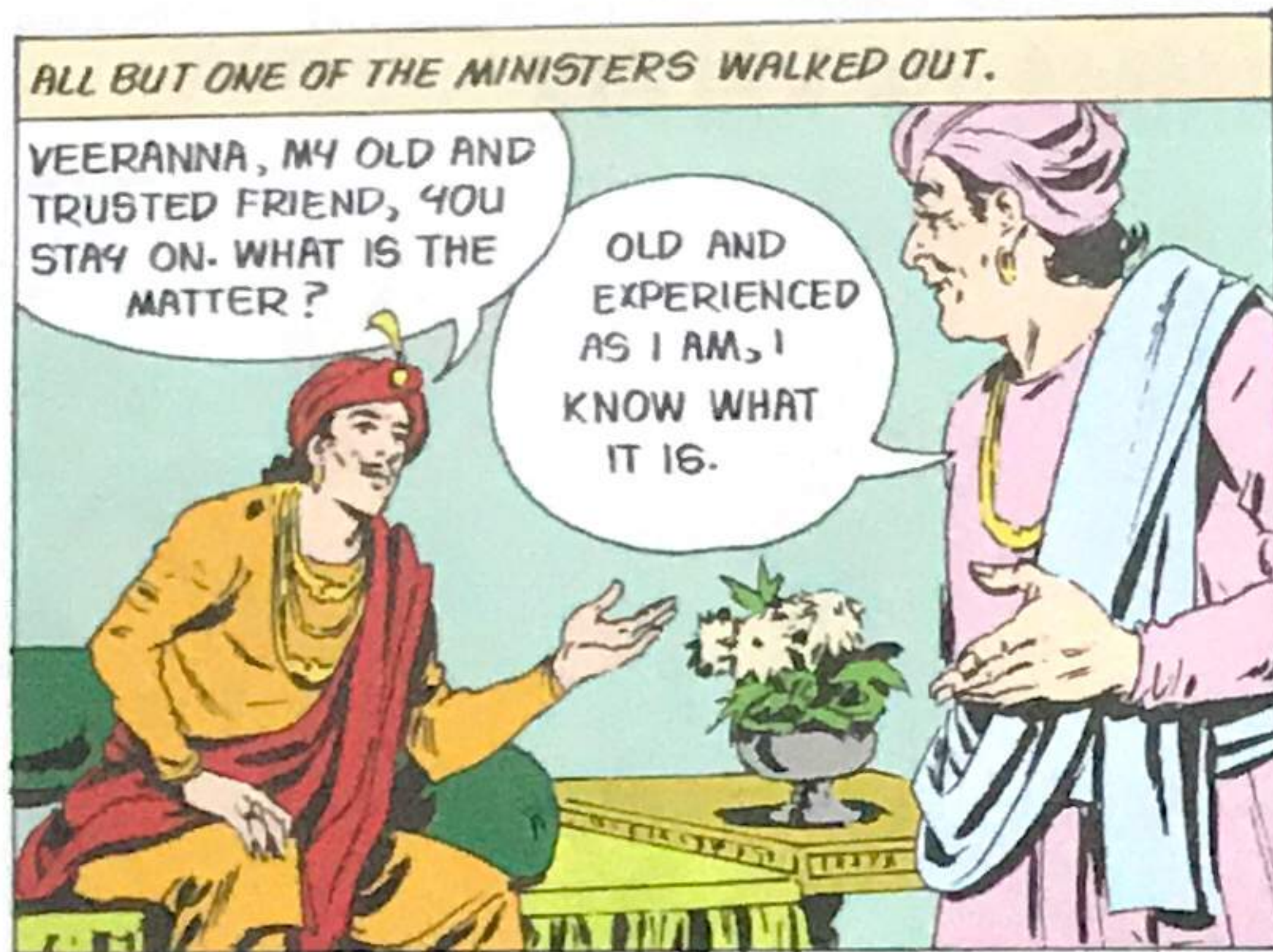
AN ALLIANCE WITH THESE POWERFUL CHIEFS WOULD DEFINITELY BENEFIT BOTH YOU AND KELADI.

HMM!

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUGGESTIONS, MY MINISTERS. I WANT TO BE LEFT ALONE NOW.



* A KINGDOM IN THE MALNAD AREA OF KARNATAKA.



AND LITTLE CHENNA, THE MERCHANT'S EXUBERANT CHILD-LIKE DAUGHTER...



... IN THE FOLLOWING MONTHS, BECAME TRANSFORMED ...



... INTO ...



... RANI CHENNA OF KELADI.



MY CHENNA IS NOW READY TO BECOME THE MOTHER OF THE HEIR TO KELADI'S THRONE.



YEARS PASSED.

WHERE SHALL I PUT THESE, AMMA?



IN THE SHED, PLEASE. THIS COURTYARD MUST BE CLEARED QUICKLY FOR THIS AFTER-NOON. THE POOR WILL BE FEASTED.

IT'S LATE; I'LL CARRY SOMETHING TOO.



HIGHNESS, YOU MUSTN'T. I'LL TAKE THAT.



OH, IT'S YOU!



BECOME QUITE OLD, HASN'T IT, THIS LITTLE CRADLE?

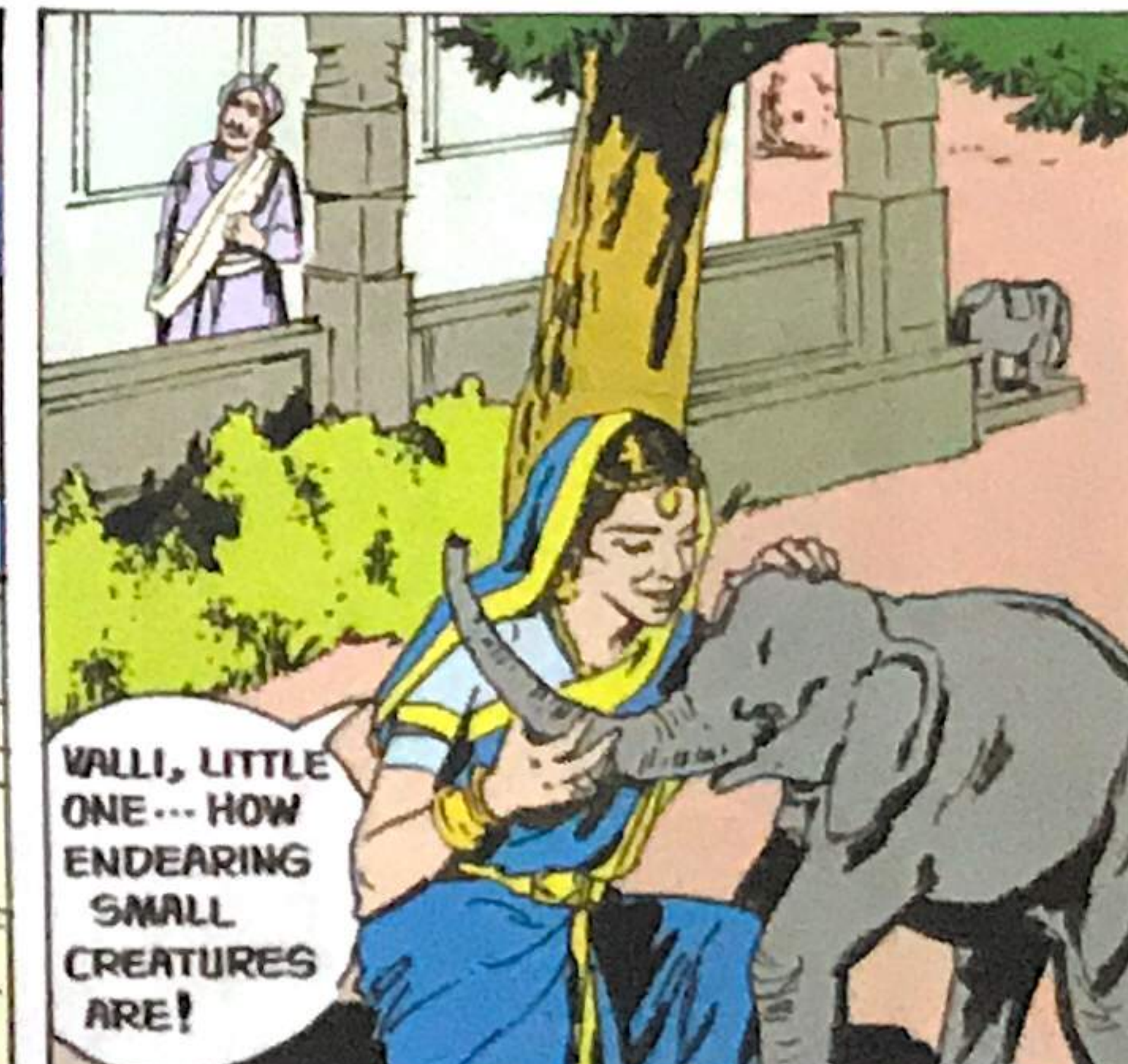
IGNORING BHARAMA, THE QUEEN TURNED TO KORAGA.

TAKE THIS HOME FOR YOUR NEW-BORN SON.



THANK YOU, HIGHNESS.

AMMA, LOOK, HERE'S GAURI BEING TAKEN TO GRAZE WITH HER CALF, VALLI.



VALLI, LITTLE ONE... HOW ENDEARING SMALL CREATURES ARE!

BHARAMA WAS LOST IN HIS OWN THOUGHTS WHEN CHENNAMMA LEFT THE PLACE.



A FEW MINUTES LATER —



BHARAMA!

EH!

PARDON ME, MAHARAJ... BHARAMA, WHAT ARE YOU DREAMING OF?



I WAS DREAMING OF AN HEIR TO THE THRONE, MAHARAJ... A SON AS HANDSOME AND COMPETENT AS HIS FATHER...



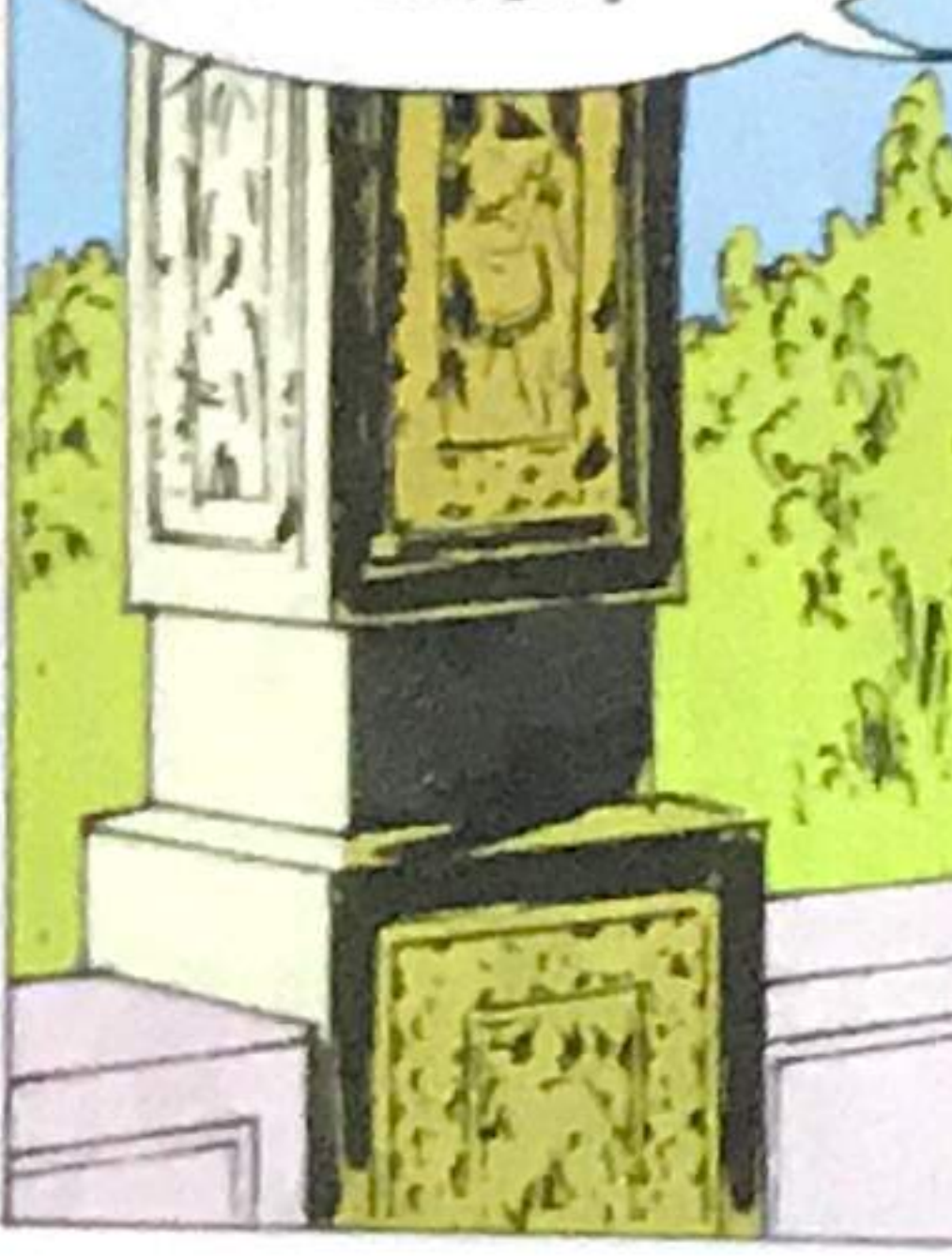
DON'T WE ALL WISH THAT?

IT'S BEEN SOME YEARS NOW, BHARAMA. I MUST CONFESS, I AM DISAPPOINTED.



AH...

IS IT NOT SAID IN THE SACRED BOOKS THAT THE BIRTH OF A CHILD ENSURES HIS PARENTS A SAFE JOURNEY TO HEAVEN?



YOU HAVE TAKEN THE WORDS STRAIGHT OUT OF MY MOUTH, HIGHNESS.



WHICH REMINDS ME. I CAN SUGGEST A REMEDY.



A REMEDY? BUT BHARAMA, HAVE THERE NOT BEEN CHILDLESS COUPLES BEFORE NOW?



AND IF FATE HAS SO WILLED, THEN WE MUST BEAR WITH IT.



EH...?

YES. THOUGH CHENNA AND I HAVE BARELY DISCUSSED IT, I KNOW HER MIND ON THIS MATTER.



AH! THERE YOU ARE MISTAKEN, HIGHNESS. THE QUEEN...



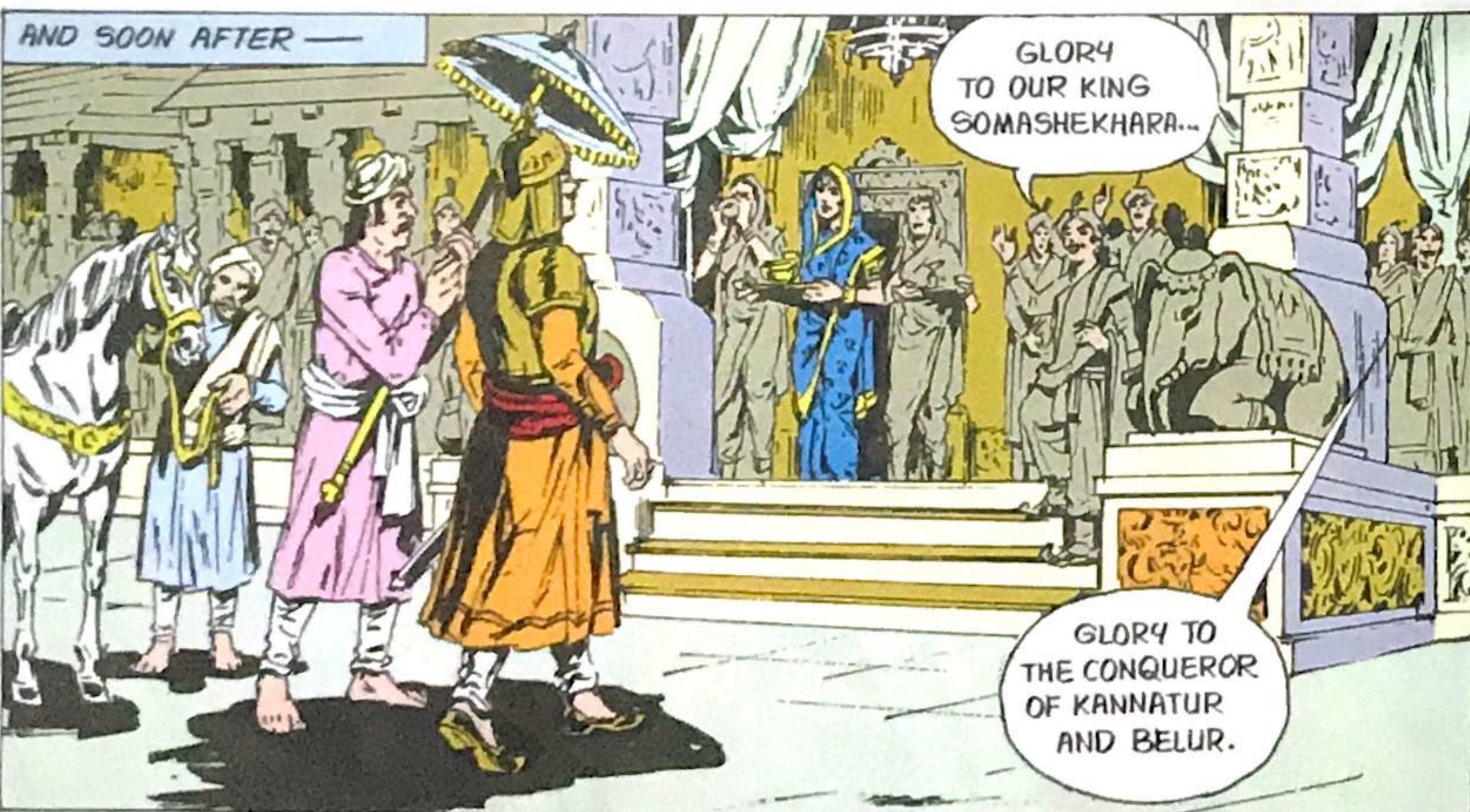
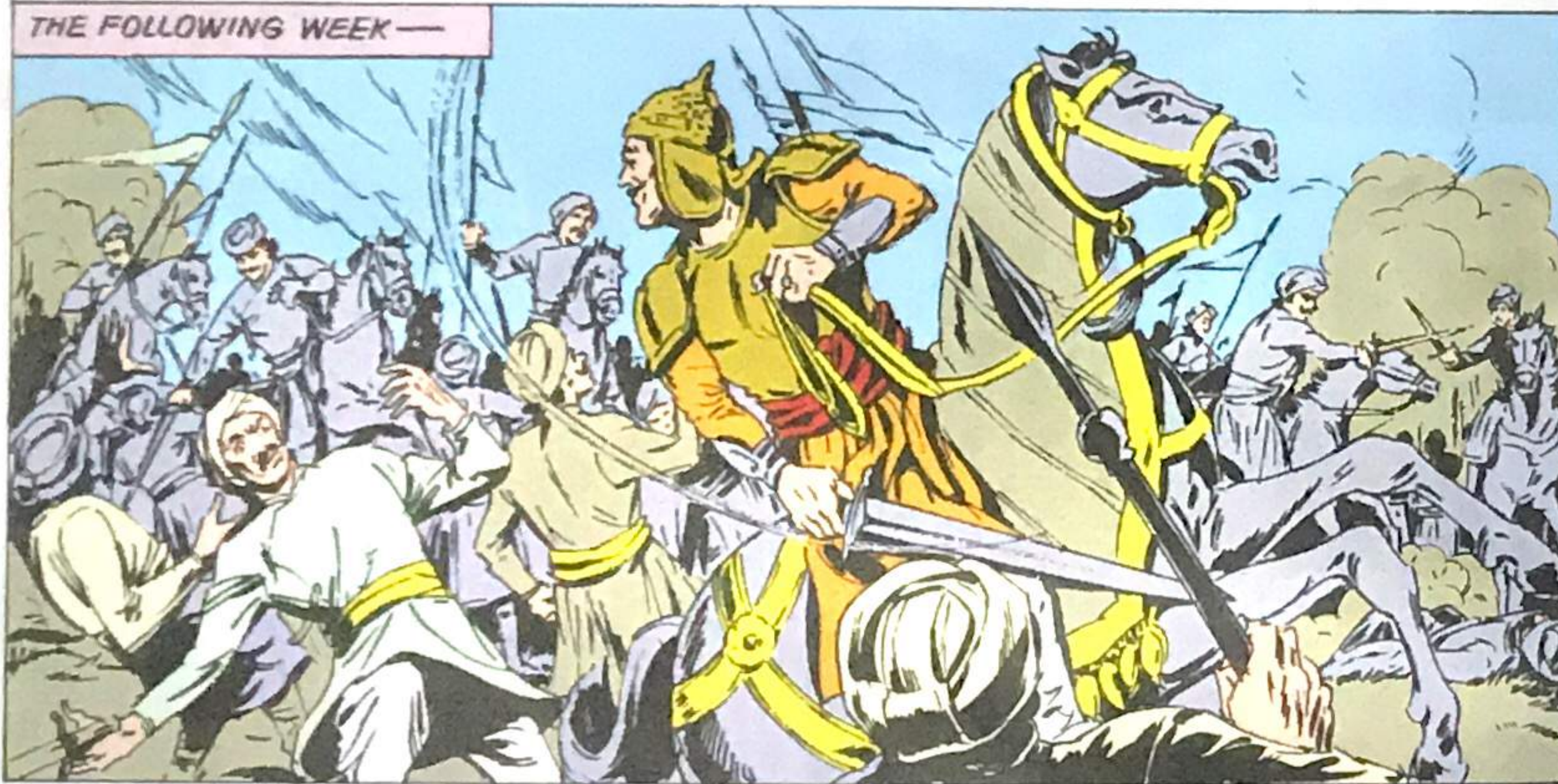
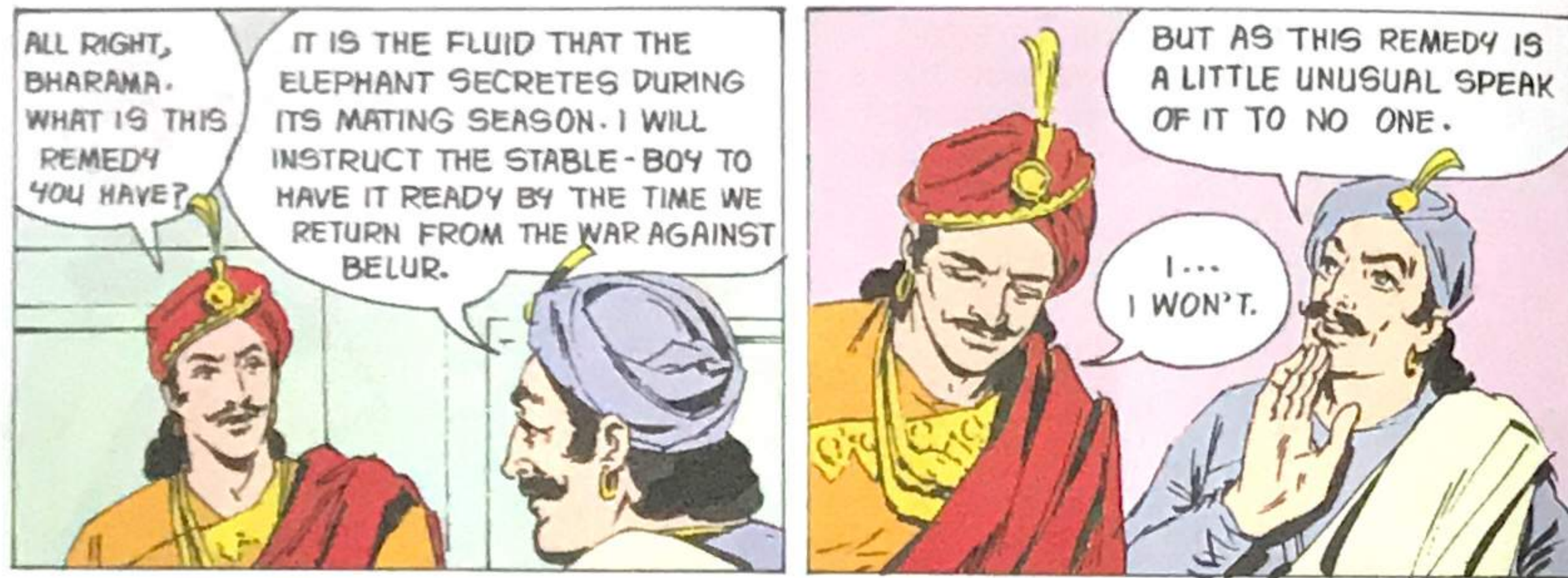
... IS SILENTLY PINING FOR A CHILD.

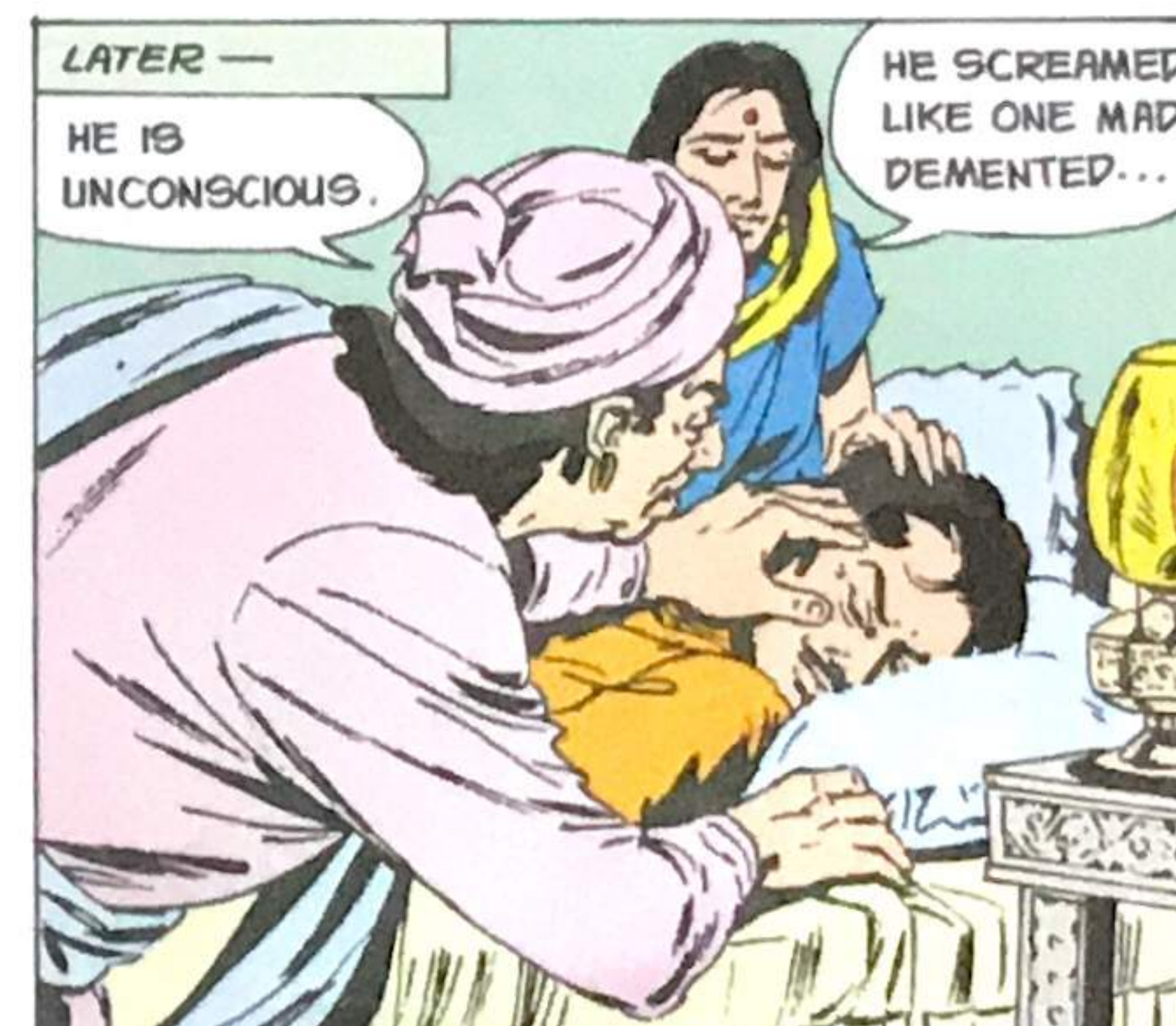
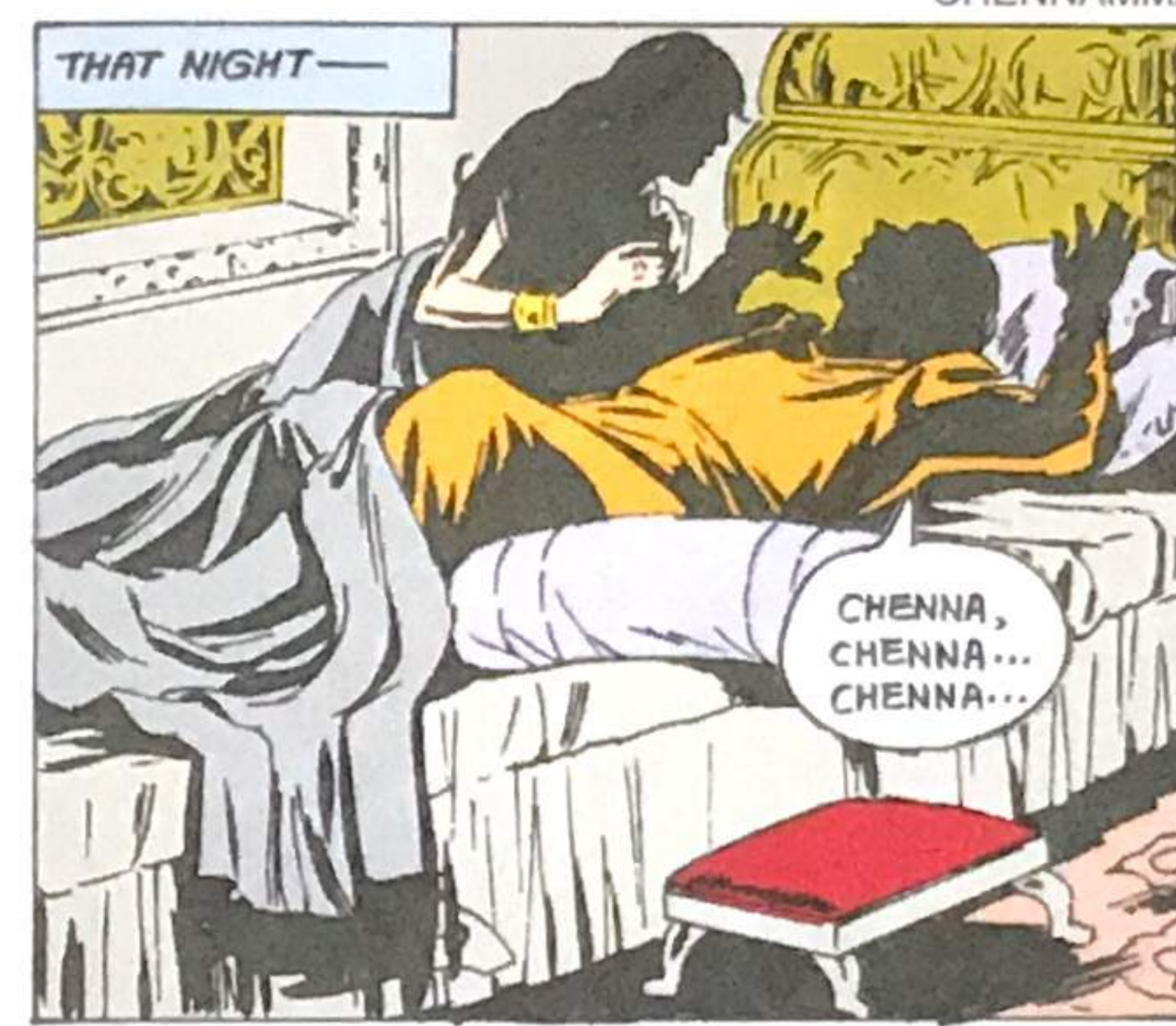


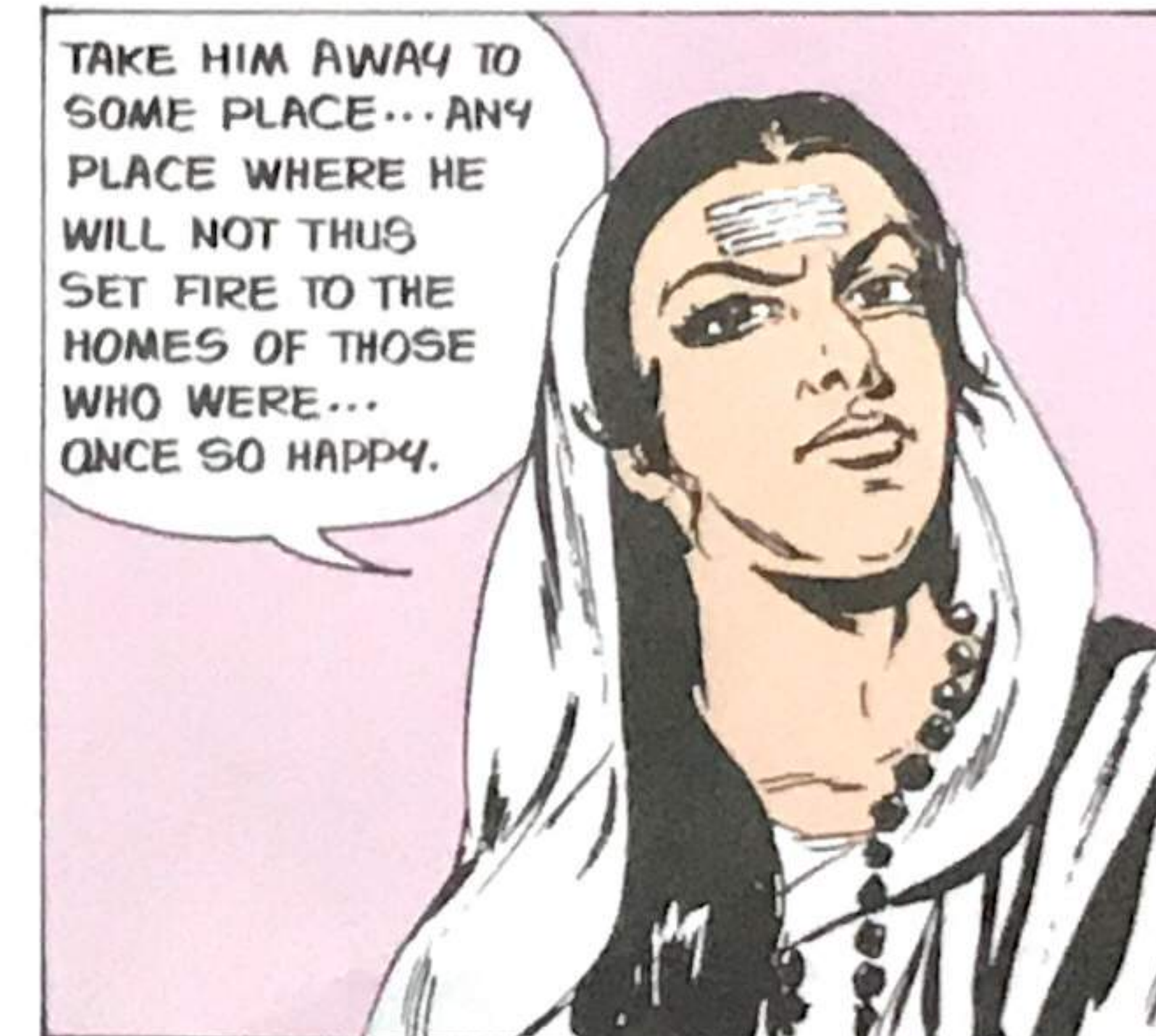
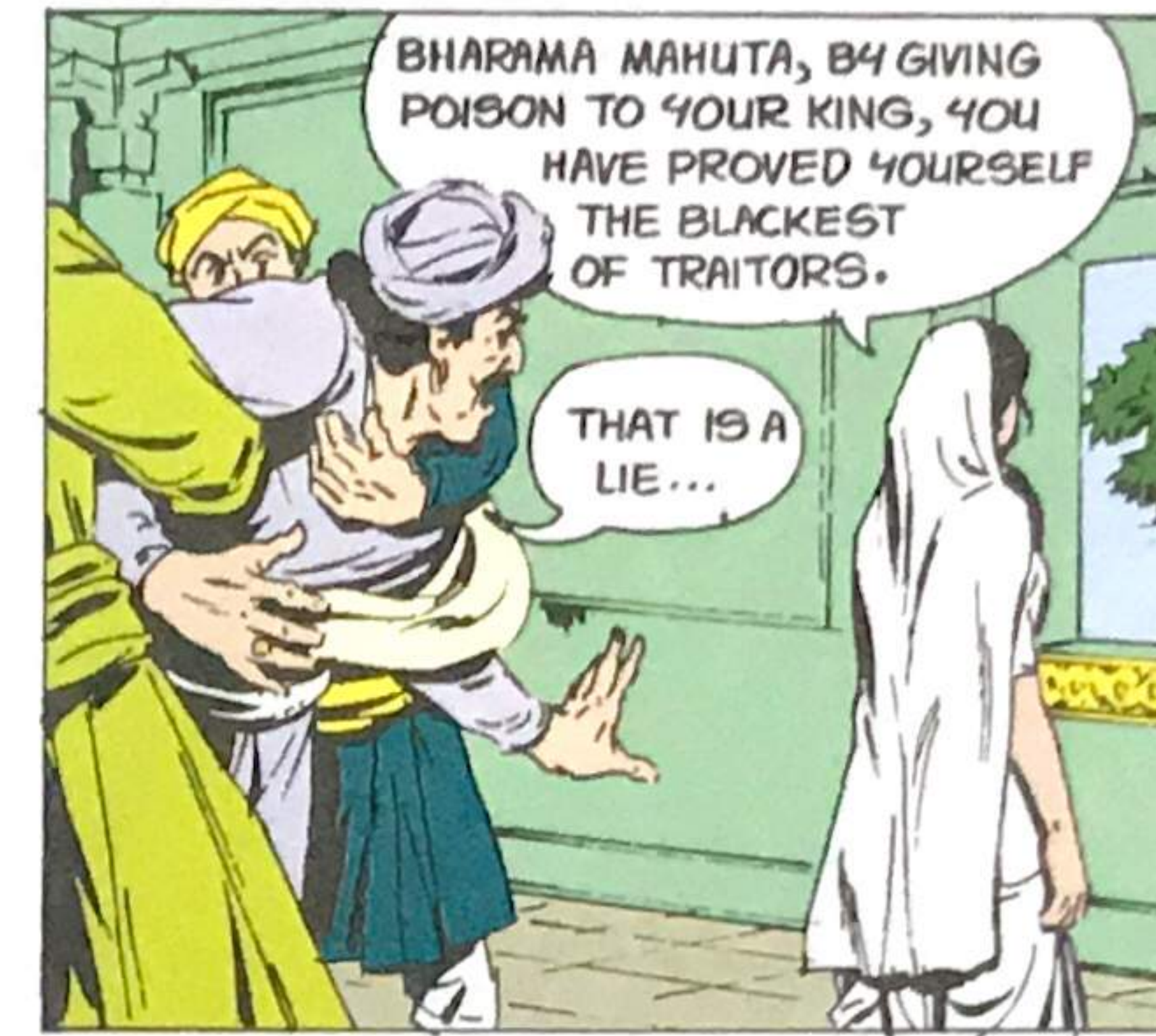
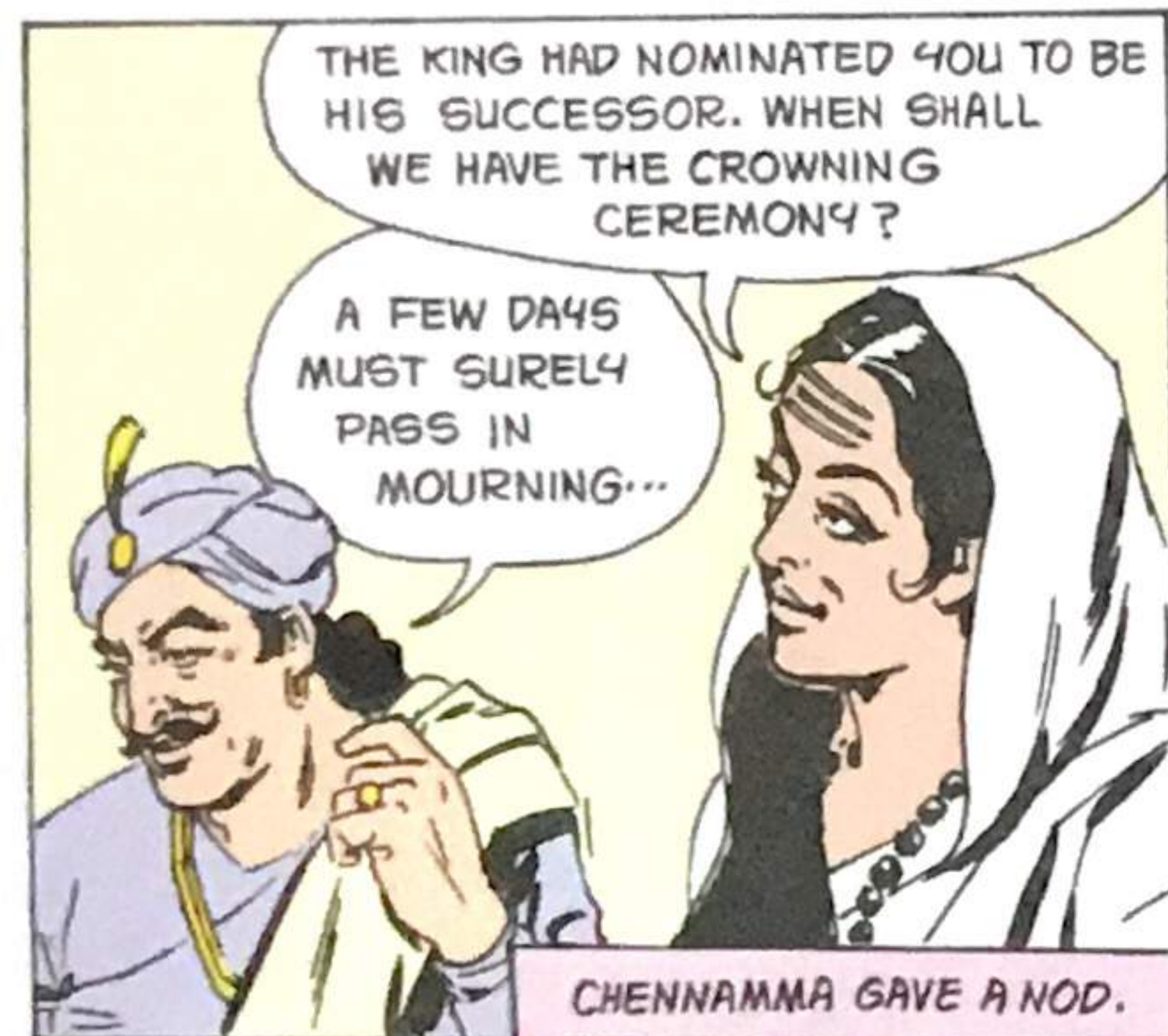
WHAT DO YOU MEAN?

I KNOW IT. I SAW HER CARESSING AN ELEPHANT CALF, WITH TEARS IN HER EYES. AND SHE HELD A CRADLE MOST TENDERLY.



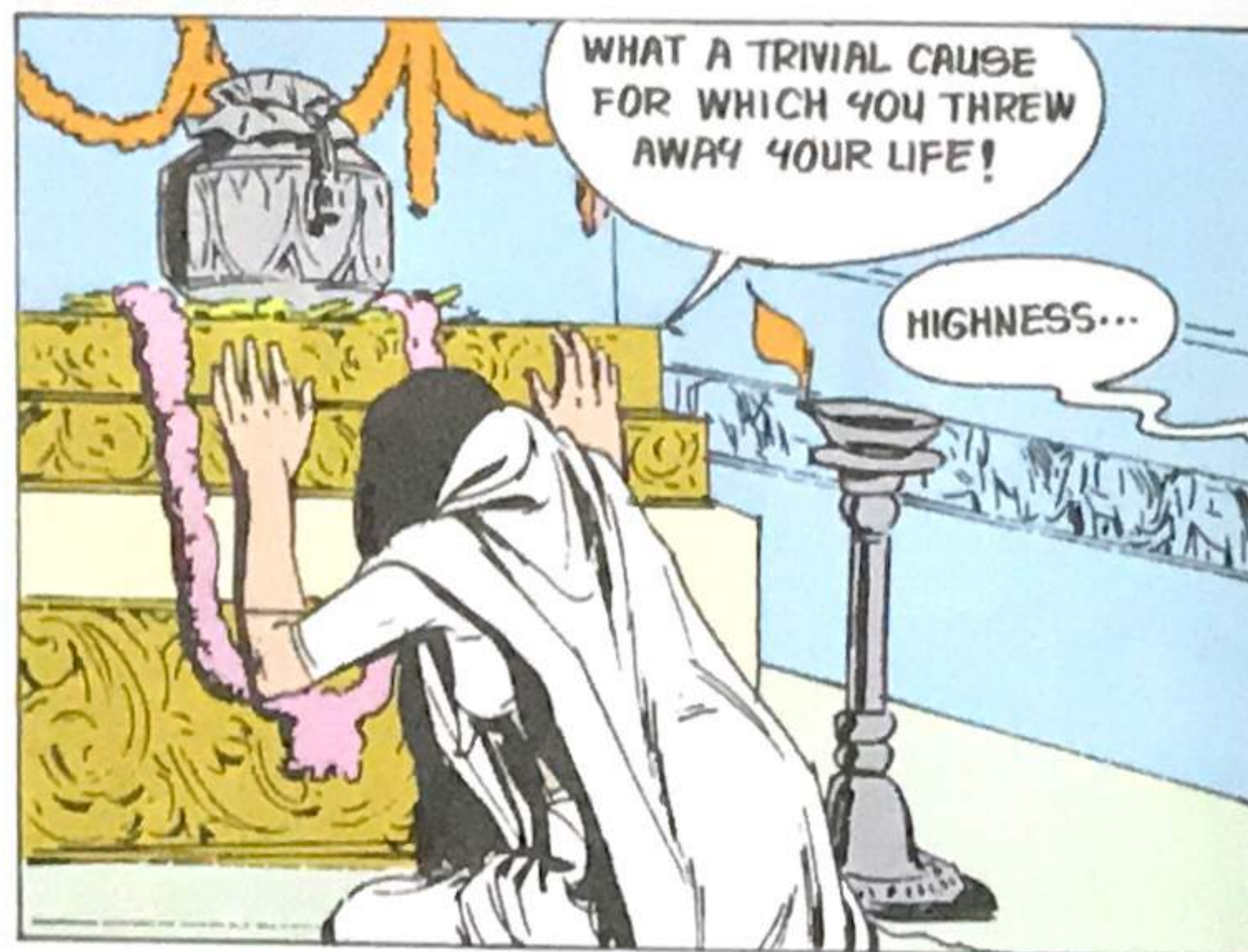








CHILDREN? SONS? HEIRS? WE HAD EACH OTHER. AND NEED OUR CHILDREN BE BORN OF OUR OWN BODIES? THE CITIZENS OF KELADI—THEY ARE OUR CHILDREN. ALL THE CHILDREN WE KNOW—THEY ARE OUR CHILDREN.



WHAT A TRIVIAL CAUSE FOR WHICH YOU THREW AWAY YOUR LIFE!

HIGHNESS...



OH, FATHER. WHY DIDN'T YOU LET ME GO WITH HIM?



HE IS GONE, CHILD. BUT HIS WORK REMAINS.

YES, HIS WORK REMAINS.



I SWEAR ON HIS ASHES, I SHALL COMPLETE HIS WORK, I SHALL LOOK AFTER KELADI; I SHALL MAKE HER THE EPITOME OF JUSTICE, NOBILITY AND BRAVERY.



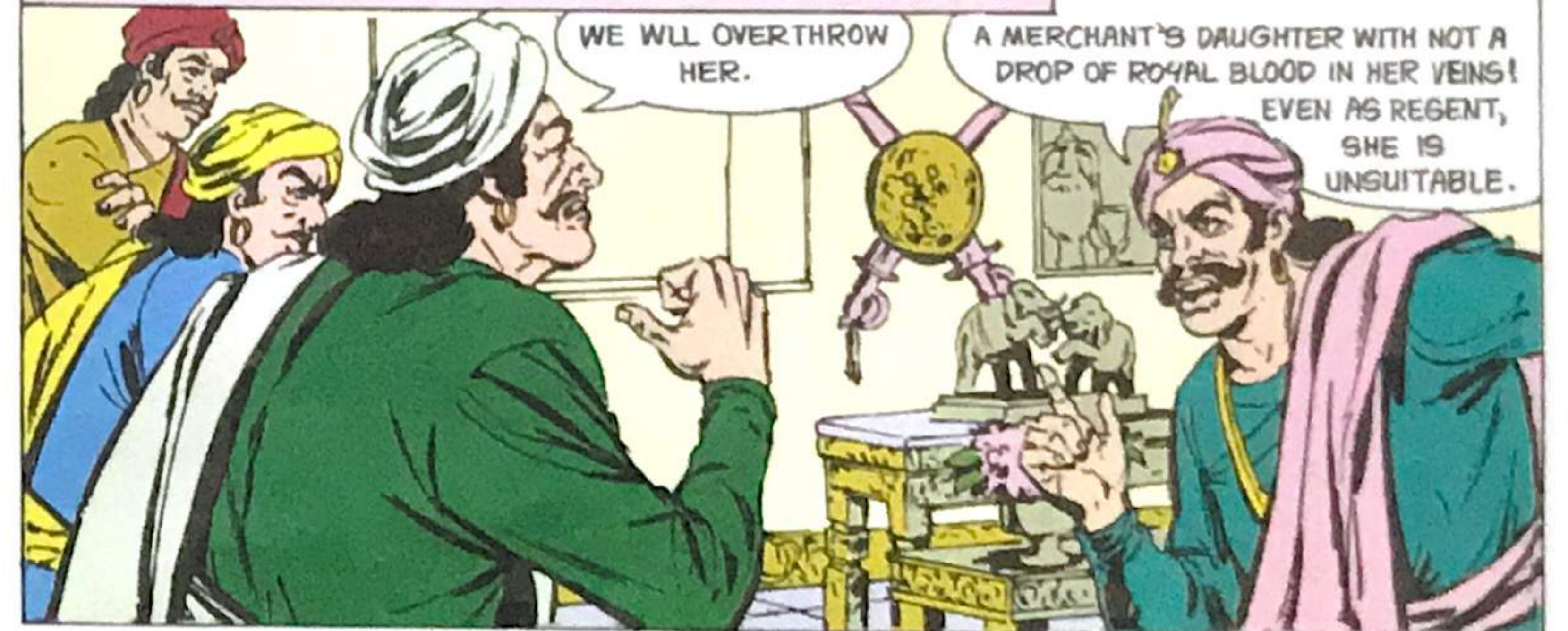
KELADI BECAME A TROUBLED LAND. EVERY POWERFUL MINISTER SPONSORED A DIFFERENT PERSON AS SUCCESSOR TO SOMASHEKHARA.

HIGHNESS, THIMMANNA MAY BE THE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF, BUT AS THE COUNCILLORS, WE WANT SHIVAPPA NAYAK HERE TO BE CROWNED KING.

GENTLEMEN, I WILL THINK THE MATTER OVER AND LET YOU KNOW.

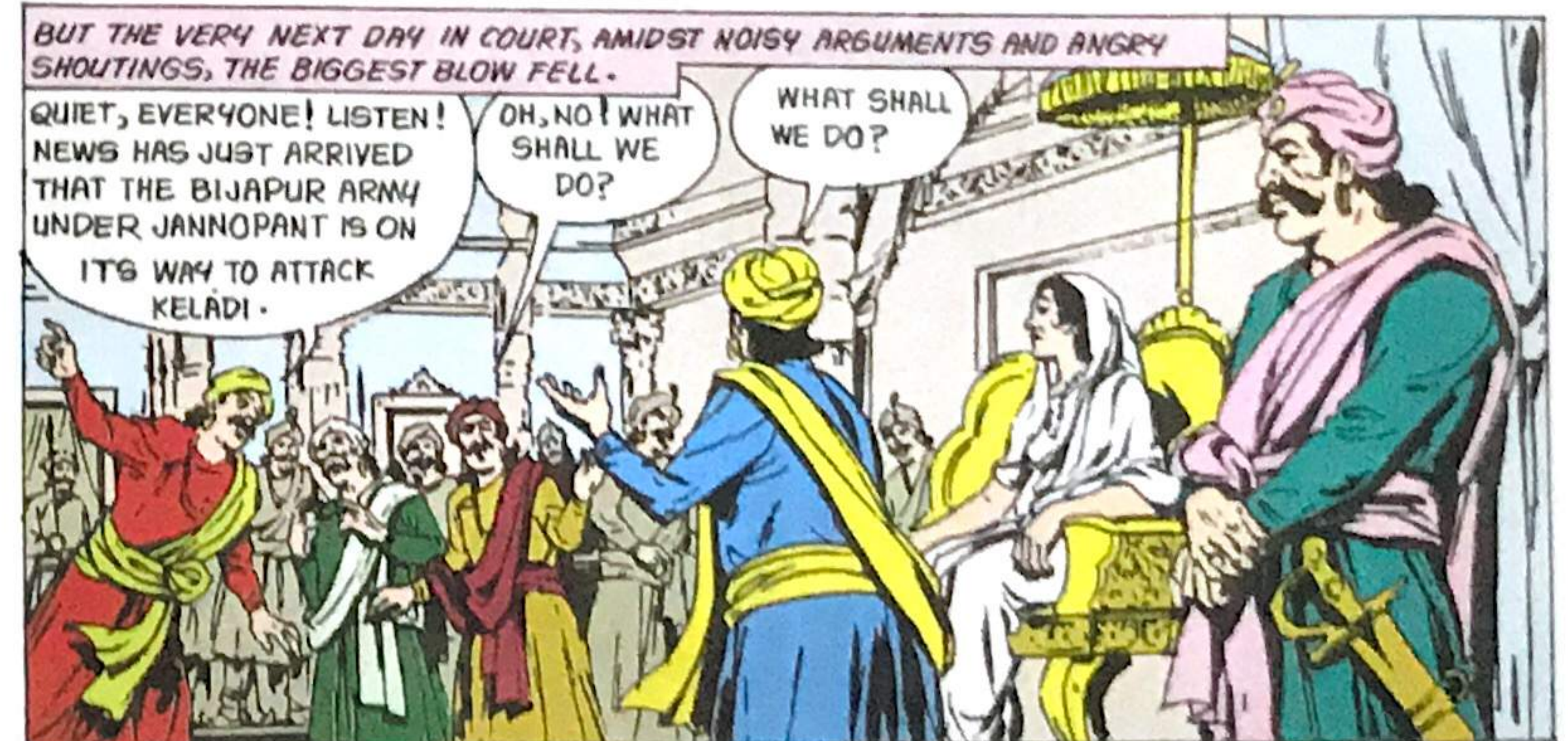
NO—I SUPPORT VEERABHADRA. HE HAS A GREATER RIGHT TO THE THRONE.

THE QUEEN'S REPLY WAS MISTAKEN FOR INDECISION AND THE INTRIGUES CONSEQUENTLY DEEPENED. THE MINISTERS BEGAN TO PLOT AGAINST CHENNAMMA HERSELF.



WE WILL OVERTHROW HER.

A MERCHANT'S DAUGHTER WITH NOT A DROP OF ROYAL BLOOD IN HER VEINS! EVEN AS REGENT, SHE IS UNSUITABLE.



BUT THE VERY NEXT DAY IN COURT, AMIDST NOISY ARGUMENTS AND ANGRY SHOUTINGS, THE BIGGEST BLOW FELL.

QUIET, EVERYONE! LISTEN! NEWS HAS JUST ARRIVED THAT THE BIJAPUR ARMY UNDER JANNOPANT IS ON ITS WAY TO ATTACK KELADI.

OH, NO! WHAT SHALL WE DO?

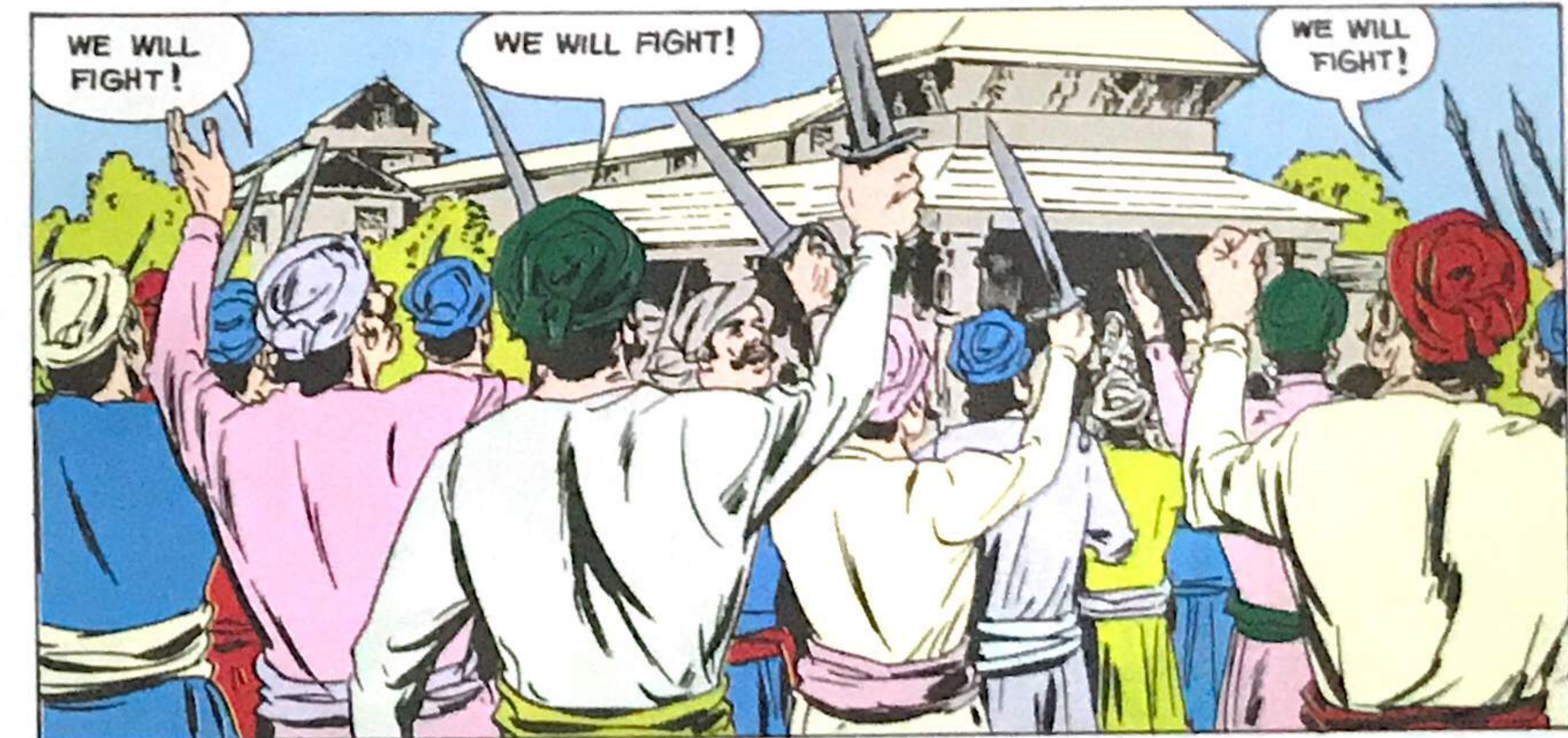
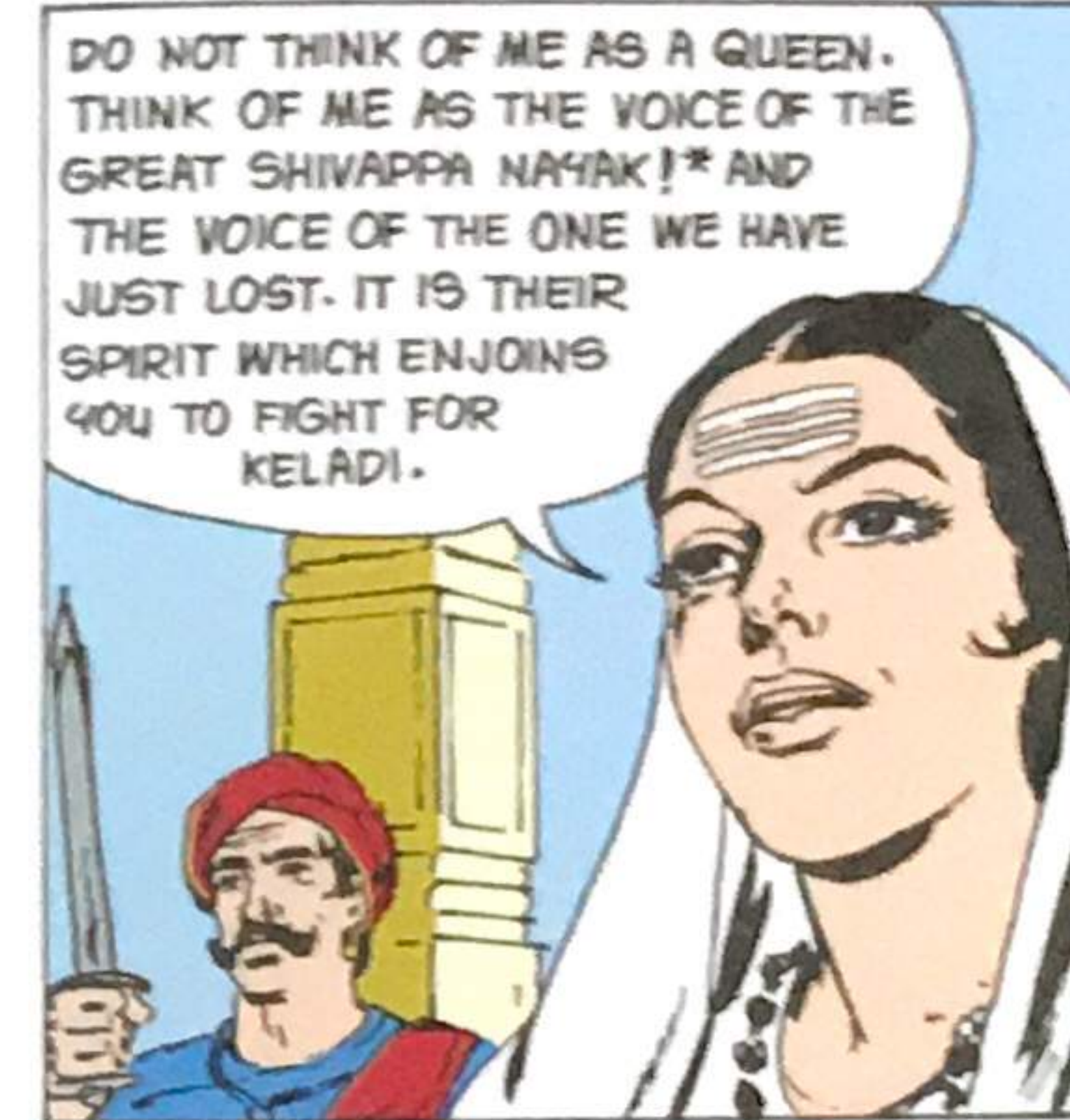
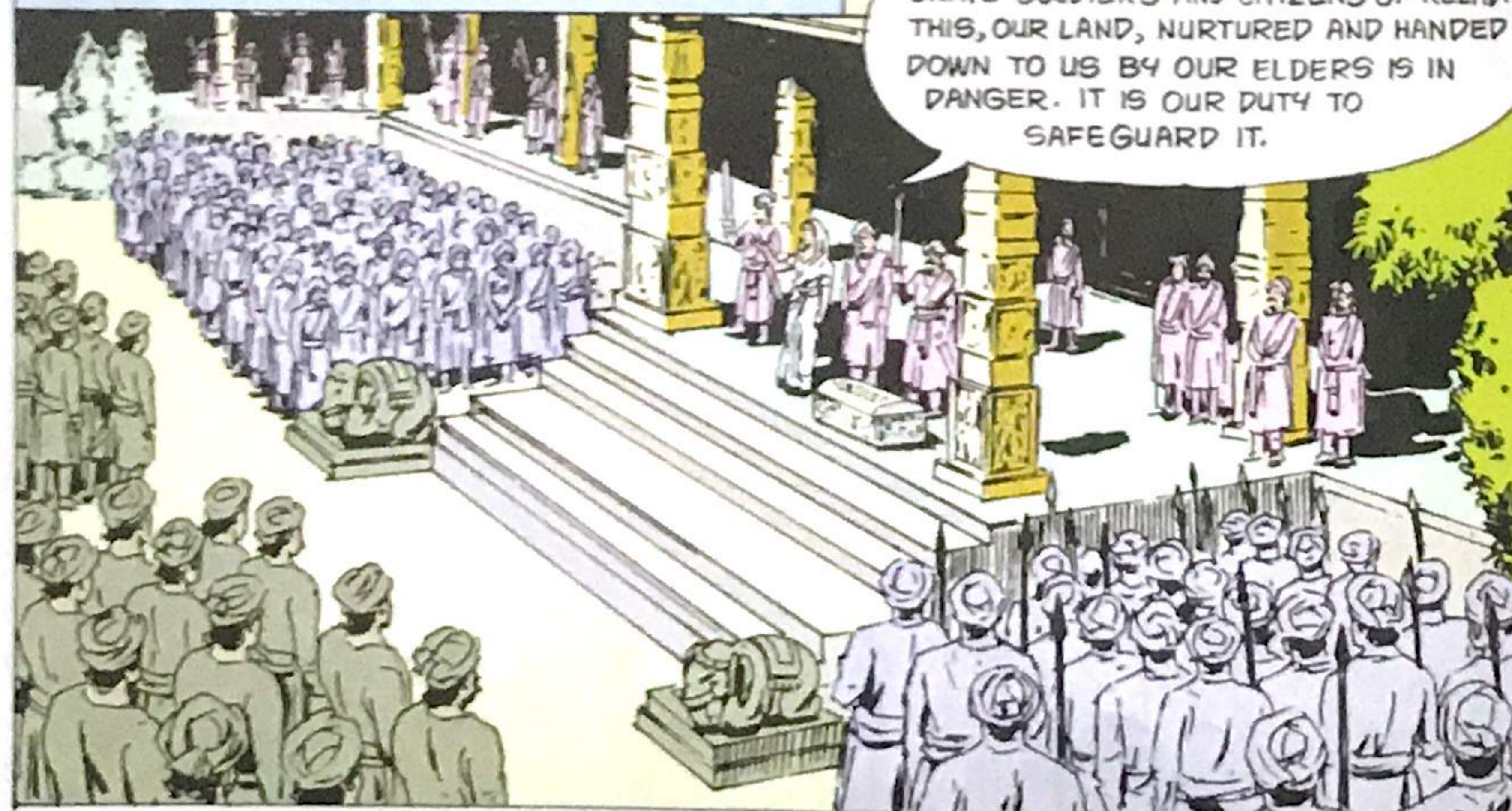
WHAT SHALL WE DO?



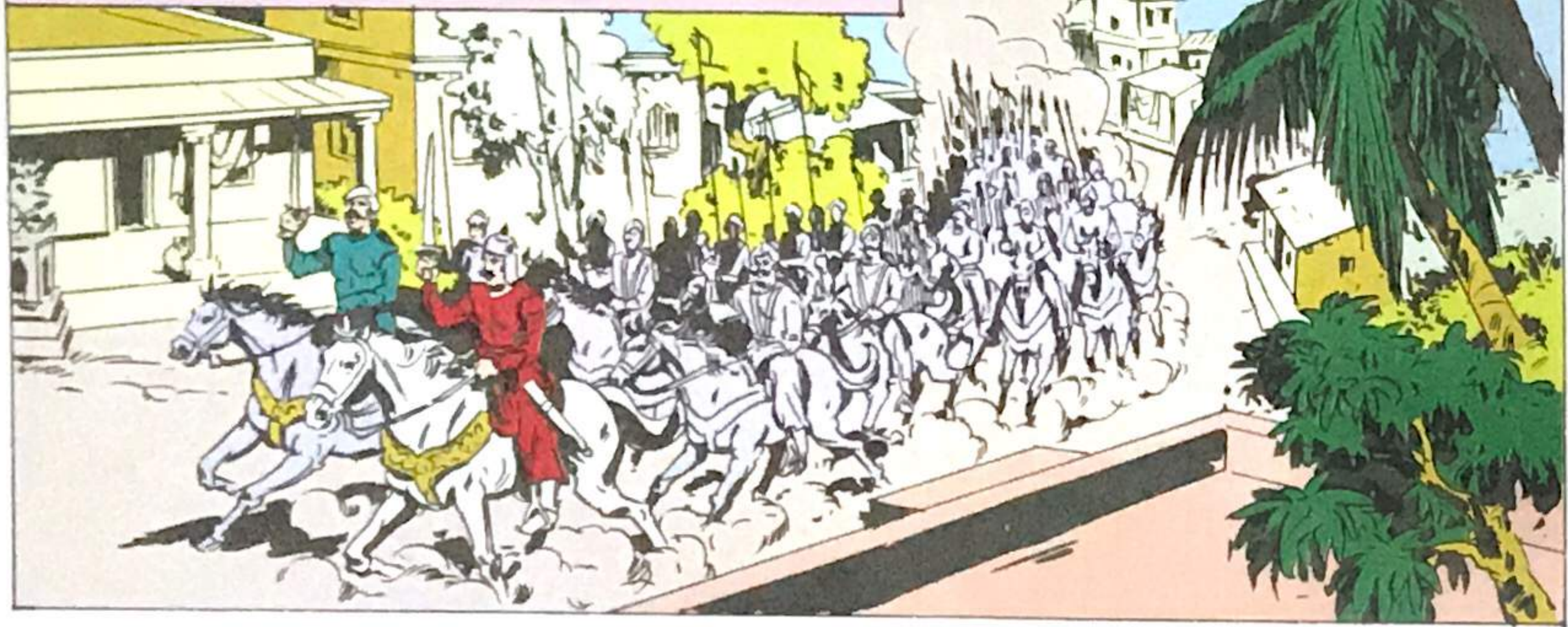
WITHOUT A WORD, THIMMANNA NAYAK BEGAN TO WALK OUT.



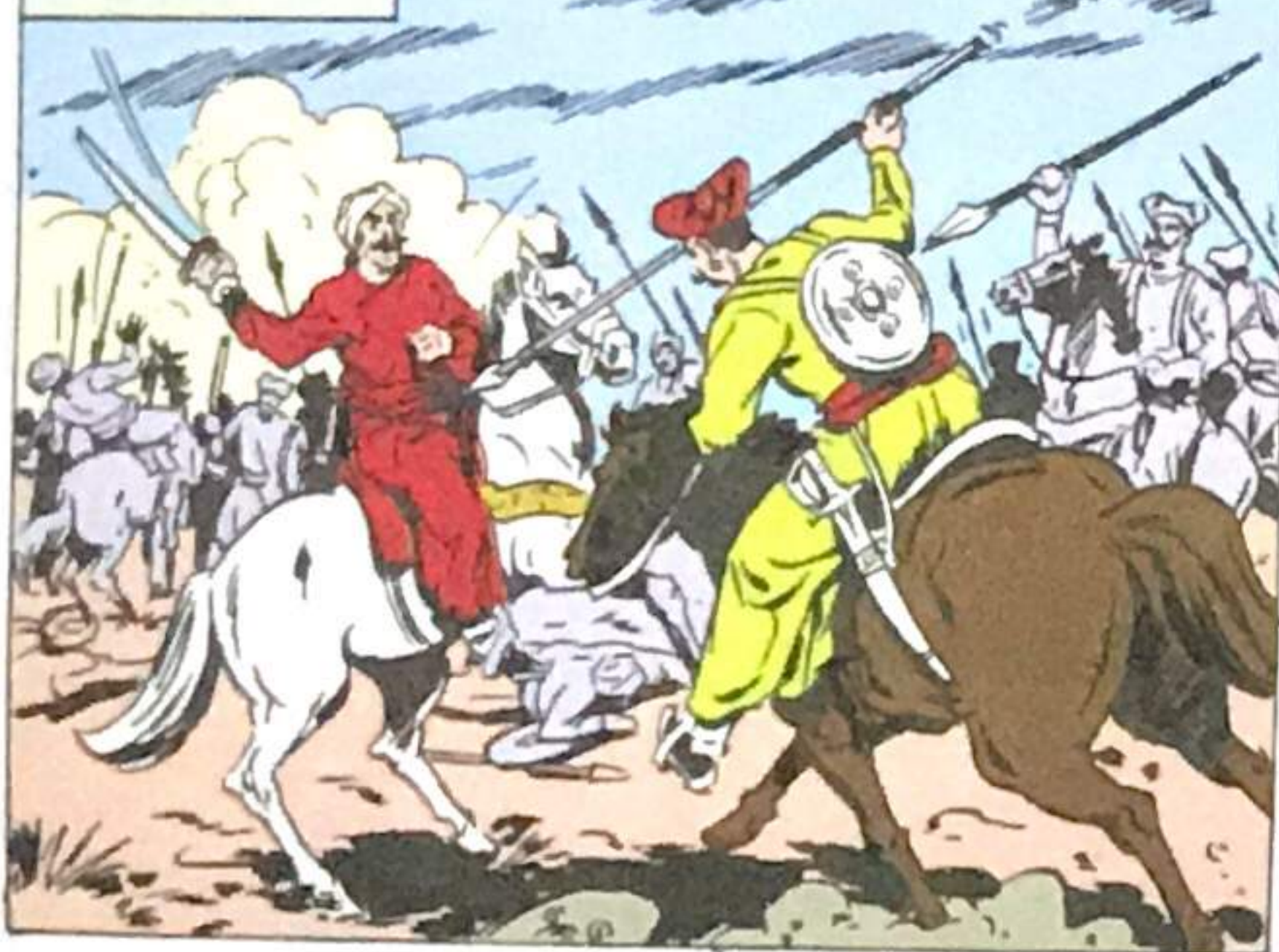
CHENNAMMA SUMMONED THE ARMY AND THE PEOPLE.



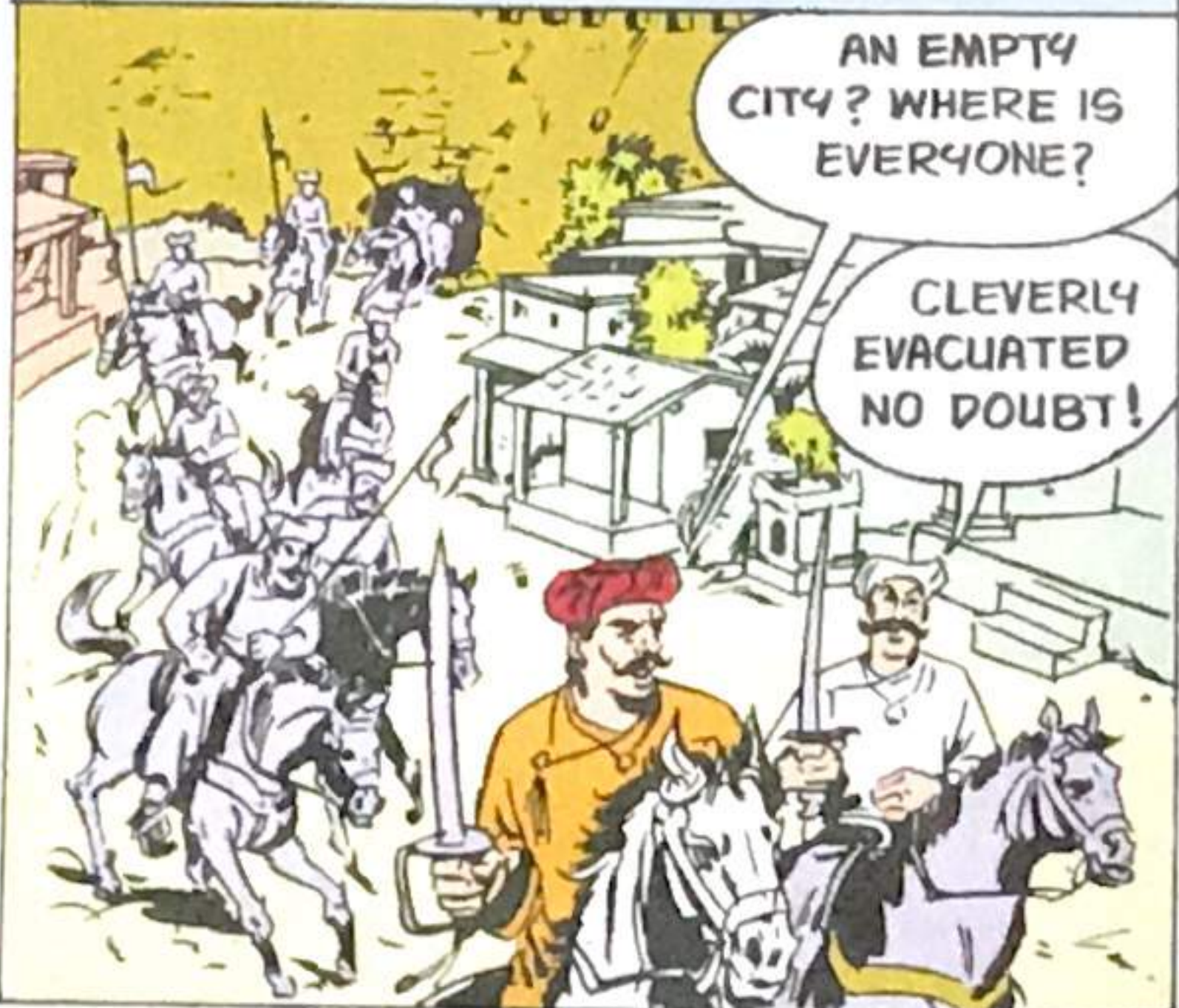
THE ARMY OF KELADI MARCHED AGAINST THE FAR LARGER ARMY OF BIJAPUR, THE SOLDIERS HELD THEIR HEADS HIGH AND THEIR HEARTS WERE ELATED.



BUT THE BIJAPUR ARMY FORCED ITS WAY THROUGH...



...AND CAPTURED THE FORT OF BIDANUR.



AN EMPTY CITY? WHERE IS EVERYONE?

CLEVERLY EVACUATED NO DOUBT!

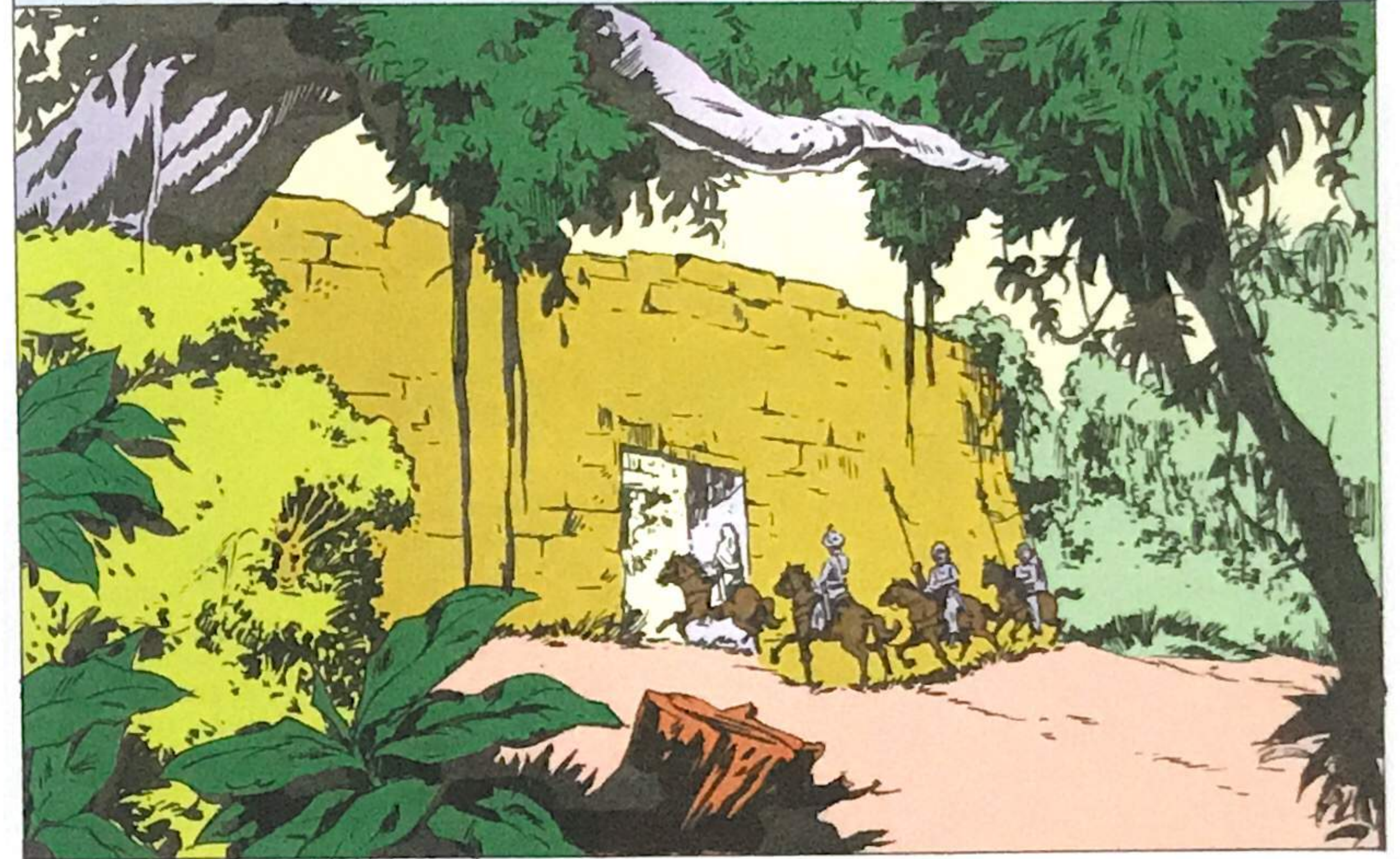
WHERE IS THE THRONE? WHERE IS YOUR WOMAN-RULER? WHERE ARE THE JEWELS, THE MONEY IN YOUR ROYAL TREASURY?



GONE WHERE YOU CAN NEVER FIND THEM. WE ARE THE FEW WHO HAVE REMAINED. DO WHAT YOU WILL WITH US.



MEANWHILE CHENNAMMA HAD TAKEN REFUGE IN THE FORTRESS OF BHUVANAGIRI, DEEP IN THE FOREST.



IT PAINS ME TO HAVE ABANDONED BIDANUR, OUR BELOVED CAPITAL.

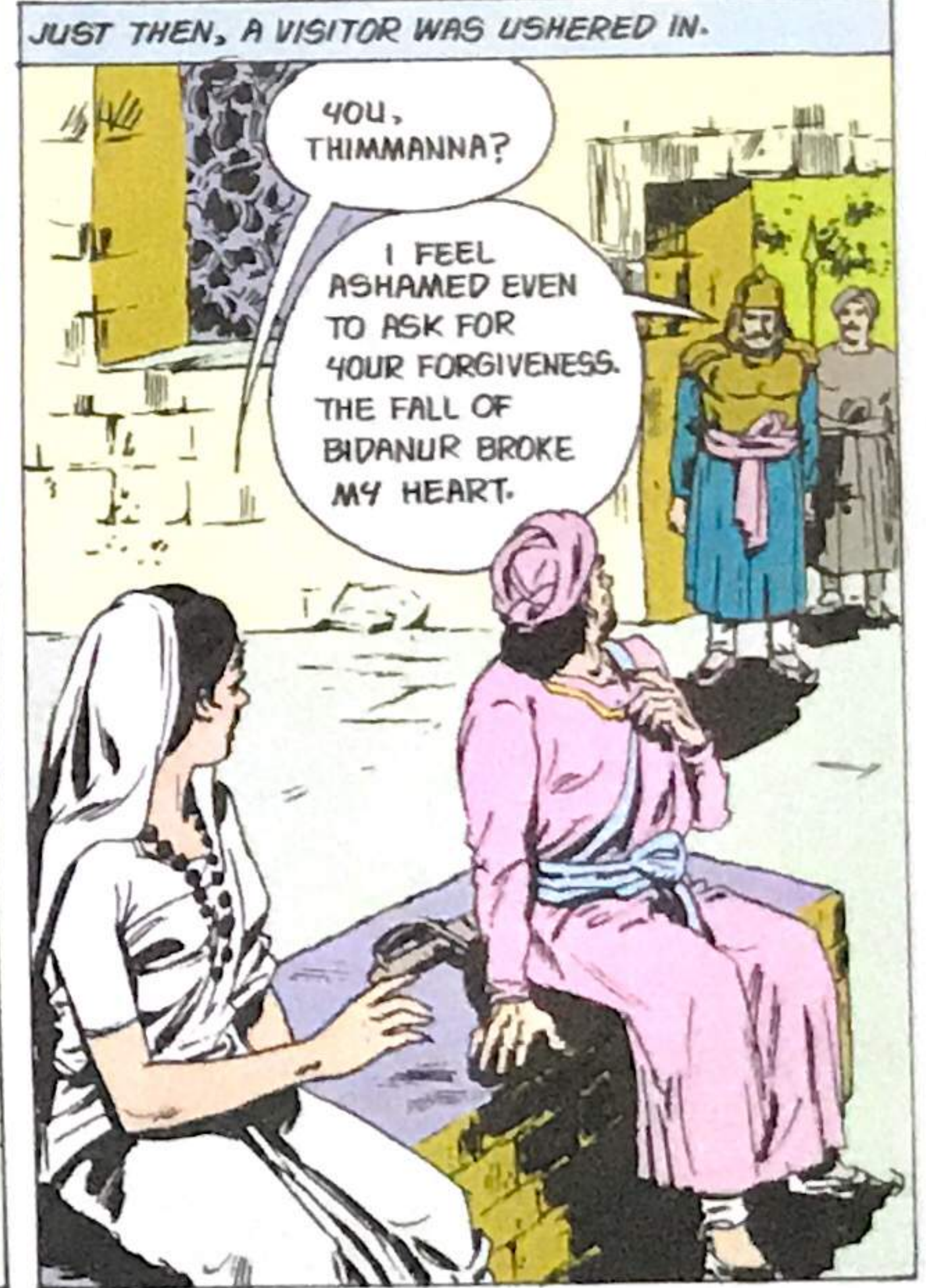
WE DID RIGHT, HIGHNESS. THE ENEMY WAS TOO POWERFUL TO RESIST.



JUST THEN, A VISITOR WAS USHERED IN.

YOU, THIMMANNA?

I FEEL ASHAMED EVEN TO ASK FOR YOUR FORGIVENESS. THE FALL OF BIDANUR BROKE MY HEART.





I HAVE SINNED IN NOT REALISING THAT THE ONE TO WHOM I OWE ALLEGIANCE IS YOU; ONLY YOU. HIGHNESS, PLEASE ACCEPT ME BACK INTO YOUR SERVICE.



THIMMANNA, OF WHAT VALUE ARE YOUR WORDS, WHEN YOU HAVE ALREADY TURNED YOUR BACK ONCE ON THE QUEEN.

WAIT VEERANNA...



THIMMANNA, WELCOME BACK.



O NOBLE HIGHNESS...

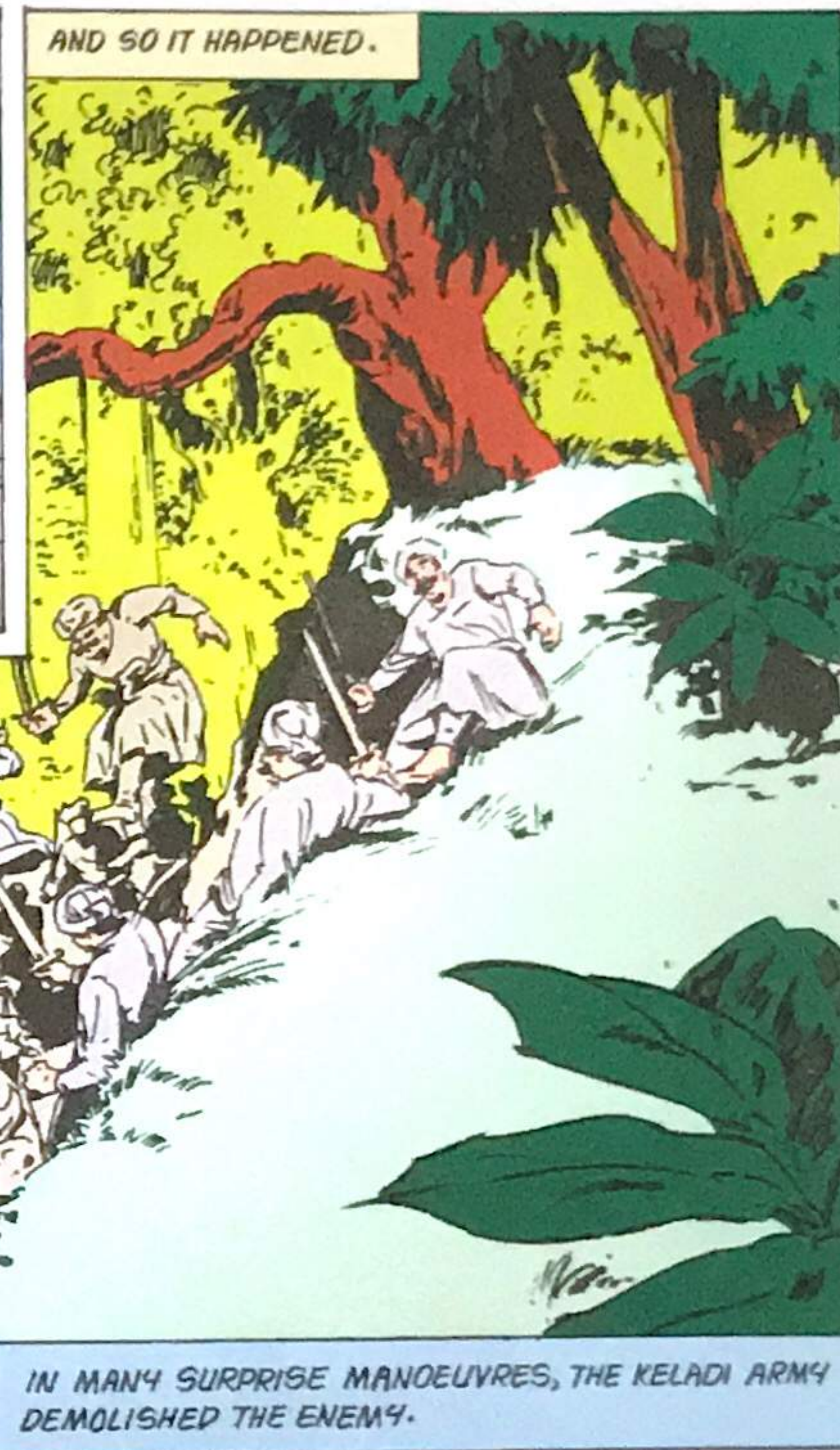
KELADI CANNOT FORGET THE SERVICE YOU HAVE SO OFTEN RENDERED. I MAKE YOU MY COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF ONCE AGAIN.

THIMMANNA NAYAK ORGANISED THE CHIEFTAINS AND CITIZENS FROM THE SURROUNDING PARTS OF BHUVANAGIRI AND TRAINED THEM INTO A COURAGEOUS BAND OF SOLDIERS.



AND SOON—

THE BIJAPUR ARMY HAS LOCATED OUR HIDEOUT. THEY ARE MARCHING TOWARDS US. MY MEN, YOU KNOW THIS TERRAIN LIKE THE BACK OF YOUR HAND. USE HIT AND RUN TACTICS. WE WILL FINISH THEM IN A WEEK.



AND SO IT HAPPENED.



IN MANY SURPRISE MANOEUVRES, THE KELADI ARMY DEMOLISHED THE ENEMY.

PROCEEDING TO BIDANUR, THEY FREED THEIR CAPITAL.



GLORY BE TO OUR QUEEN.

LONG LIVE OUR QUEEN!

THE YEAR WAS 1671, CHENNAMMA WAS CROWNED THE QUEEN.



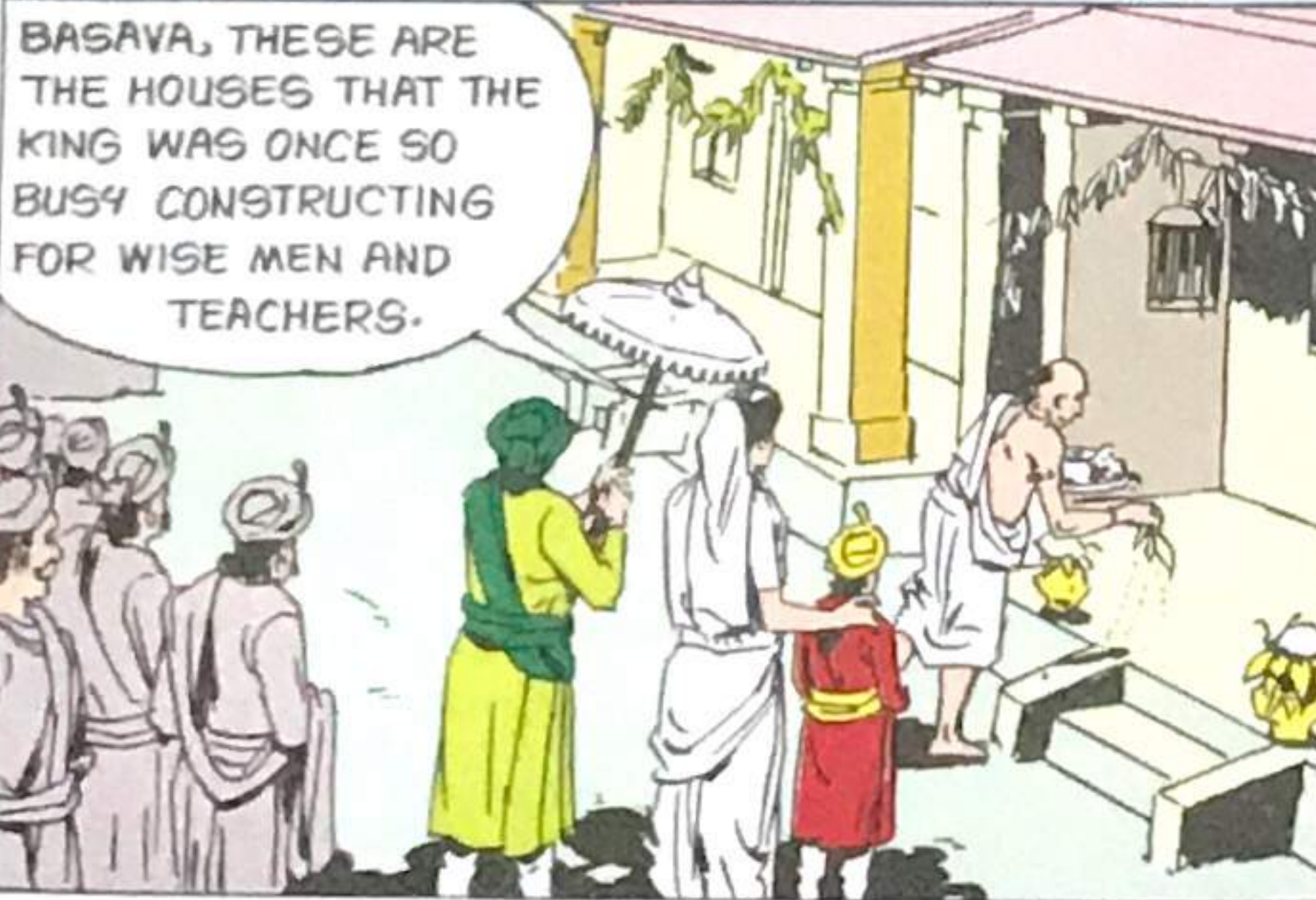
WITH GOD AS YOUR WITNESS, RULE THE KINGDOM JUSTLY AND ABLY.

CHENNAMMA TOOK FULL CONTROL OF THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE KINGDOM.



THEN, ONE DAY, CHENNAMMA CAME TO THE INAUGURATION OF AN AGRAHARA. WITH HER WAS A YOUNG BOY.

BASAVA, THESE ARE THE HOUSES THAT THE KING WAS ONCE SO BUSY CONSTRUCTING FOR WISE MEN AND TEACHERS.



NOW ONLY YOU AND I ARE HERE TO SEE IT COMPLETE. IT SHALL BE CALLED "SOMASHEKHARA".



IN MEMORY OF THE KING AND WITH THE PEOPLE'S HEARTFELT BLESSINGS, I HAVE ADOPTED YOU, BASAVA. YOU ARE OUR CHILD — THE KING'S AND MINE. LIVE TO BRING HONOUR TO HIS NAME, MY SON.

I WILL, MOTHER.



CHENNAMMA GAVE SPECIAL ATTENTION TO BASAVA NAYAKA'S UPBRINGING.

MOTHER, YOU ARE ALREADY SO BUSY AT COURT, GIVING IN CHARITY, DOING YOUR MEDITATION AND PRAYERS. WHY ADD THE JOB OF SUPERVISING MY LESSONS TO THIS LONG LIST OF DUTIES?

SON, YOU ARE KELADI'S FUTURE. IN YOU LIE OUR HOPES AND DREAMS. HOW CAN I NOT SPARE SOME MOMENTS FOR YOU?



THEN FELL ON CHENNAMMA'S SHOULDERS, THE BURDEN OF NEW WARS. MANY ENVIED KELADI'S LONG SEA-COAST THAT ENABLED HER TO TRADE PROFITABLY WITH THE ARABS, THE PORTUGUESE, THE DUTCH AND THE ENGLISH FOR VALUABLE ARAB HORSES AND MILITARY AMMUNITION IN EXCHANGE FOR THE EXCELLENT PEPPER AND RICE THAT GREW IN KELADI. CHIKKADEVARAYA WODEYAR, THE KING OF MYSORE, WAS ONE OF THESE JEALOUS RULERS. HE LAUNCHED AN ATTACK ON KELADI. MANY WARS FOLLOWED.



REBELLIOUS KELADI CHIEFTAINS AND NEIGHBOURING KINGS JOINED MYSORE TO OUST THE WOMAN IN A MAN'S WORLD. BUT CHENNAMMA, LIKE THE GODDESS OF WAR, ENLISTED VICTORY ON HER SIDE IN THE END. SHE TREATED HER PRISONERS WITH COURTESY AND WON THE ADMIRATION OF HER ENEMIES. KELADI AND MYSORE SIGNED A TREATY OF FRIENDSHIP...

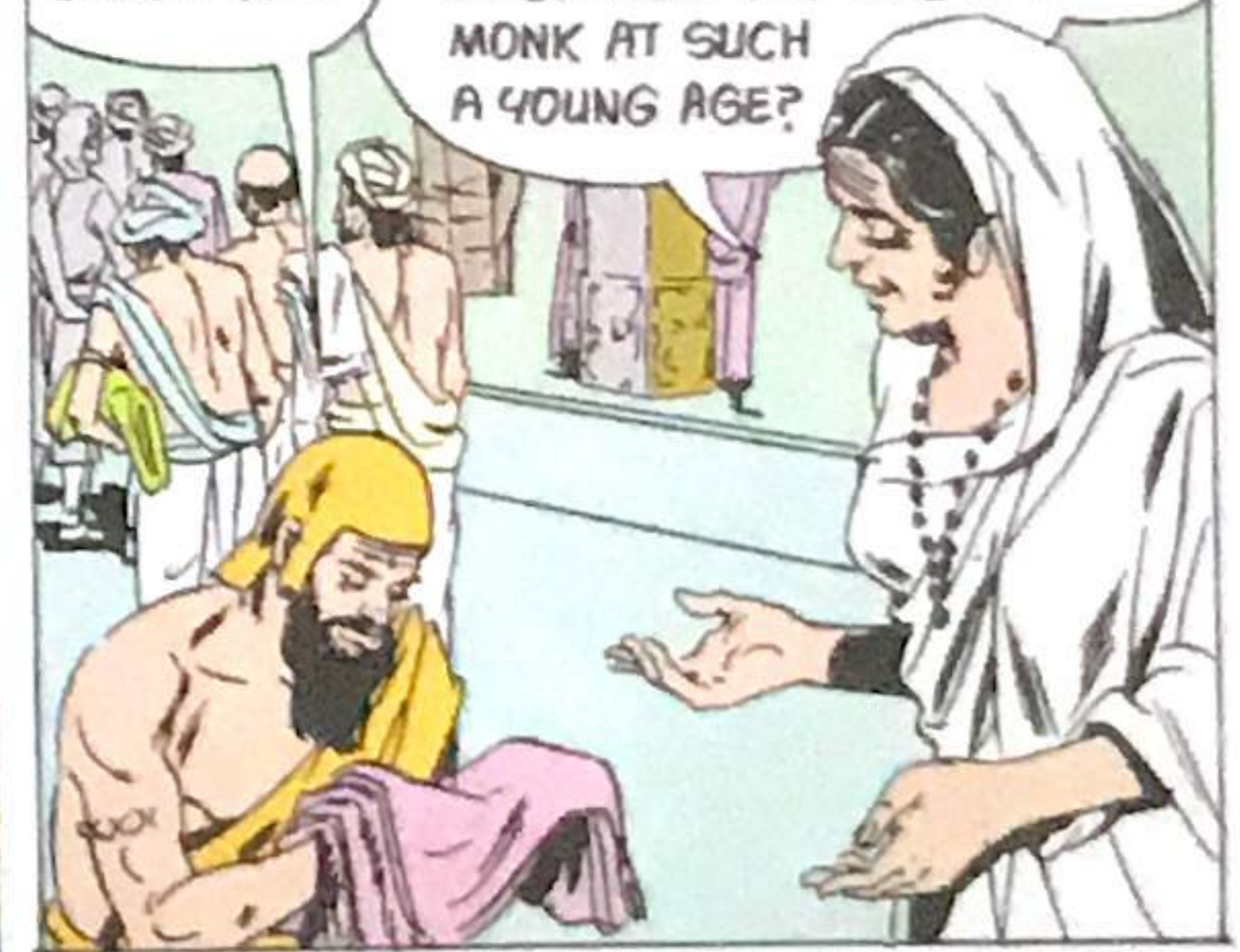
...LEADING TO A PERIOD OF PEACE. ONE DAY DURING HER DAILY ALMS-GIVING —

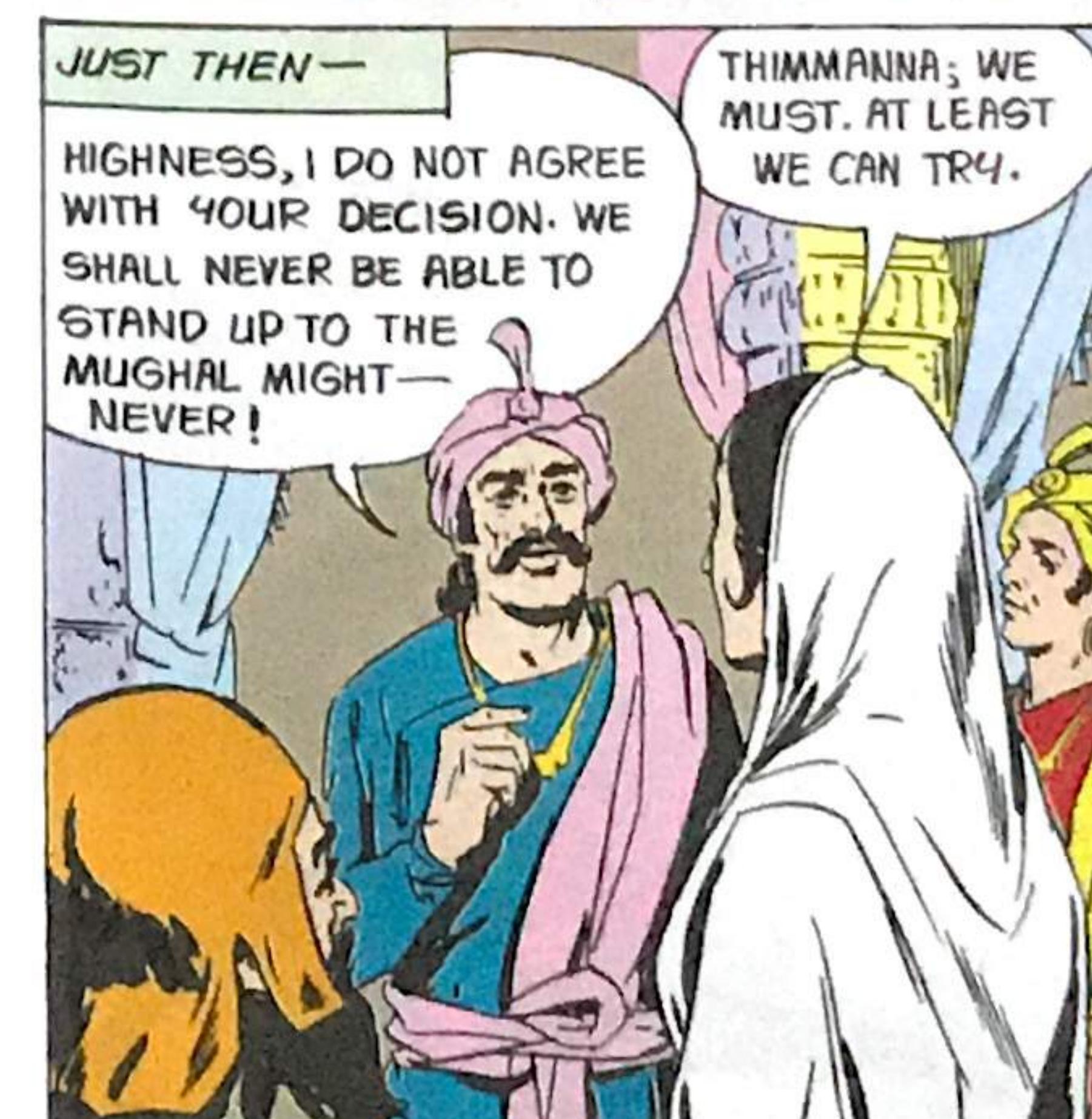
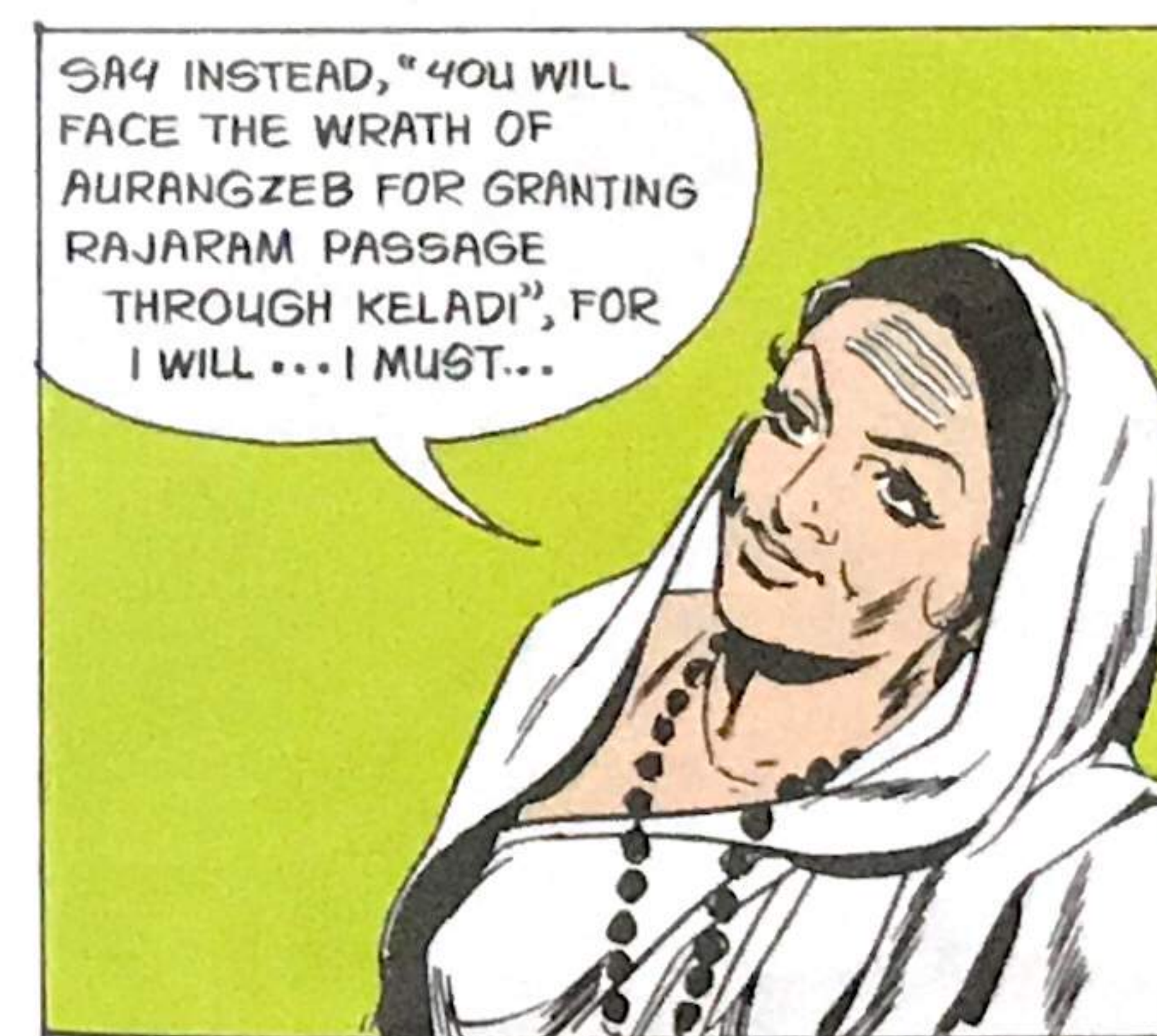
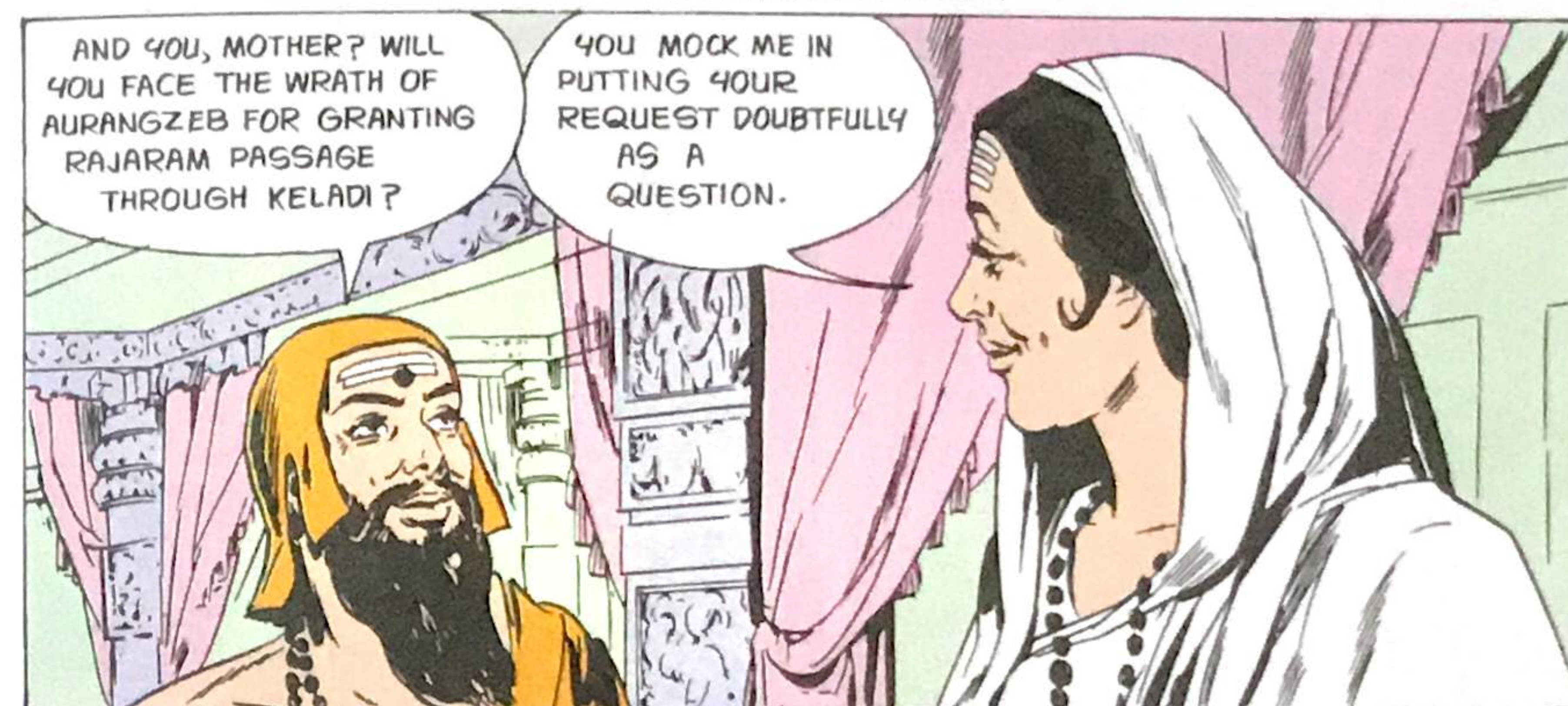
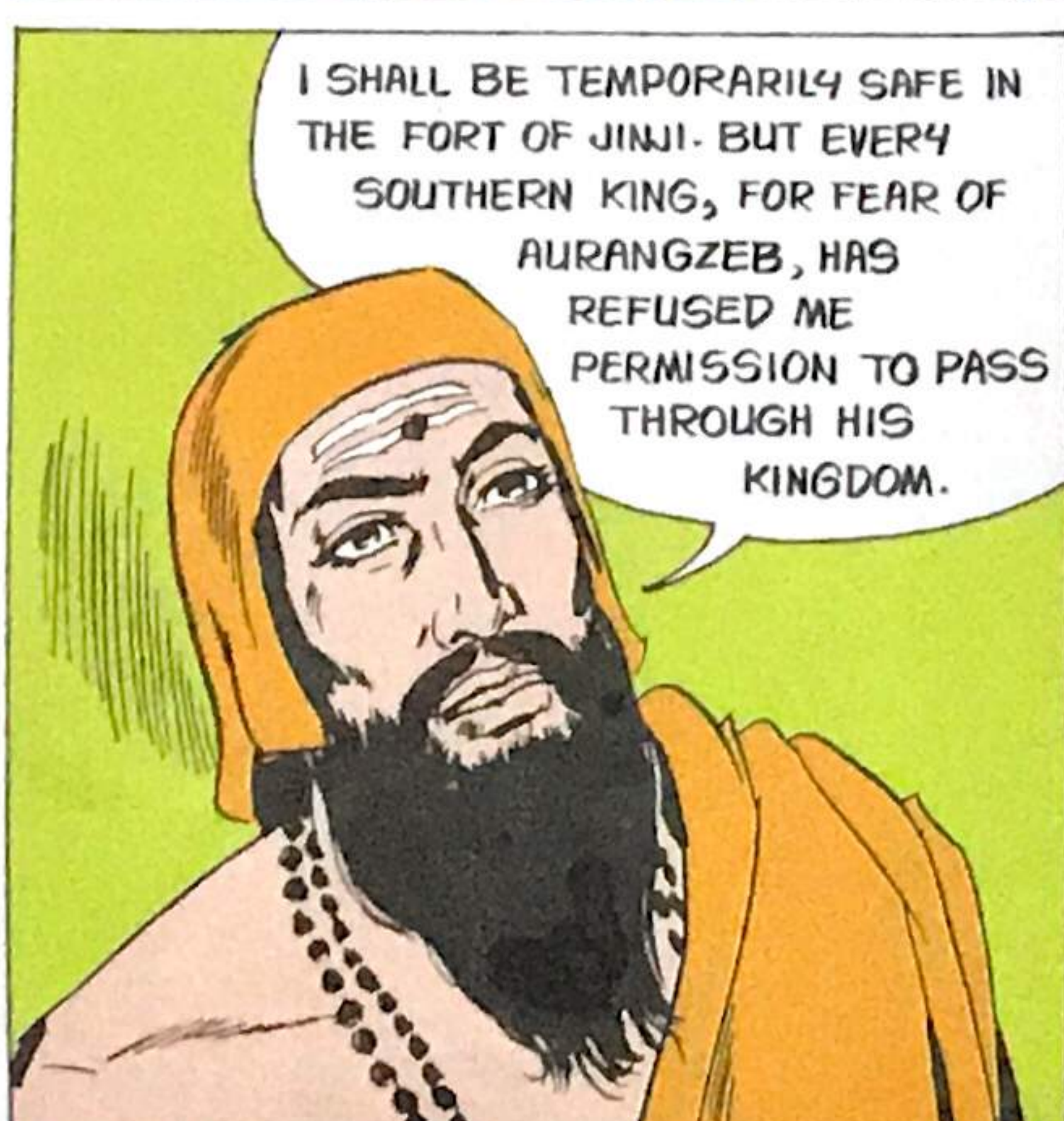
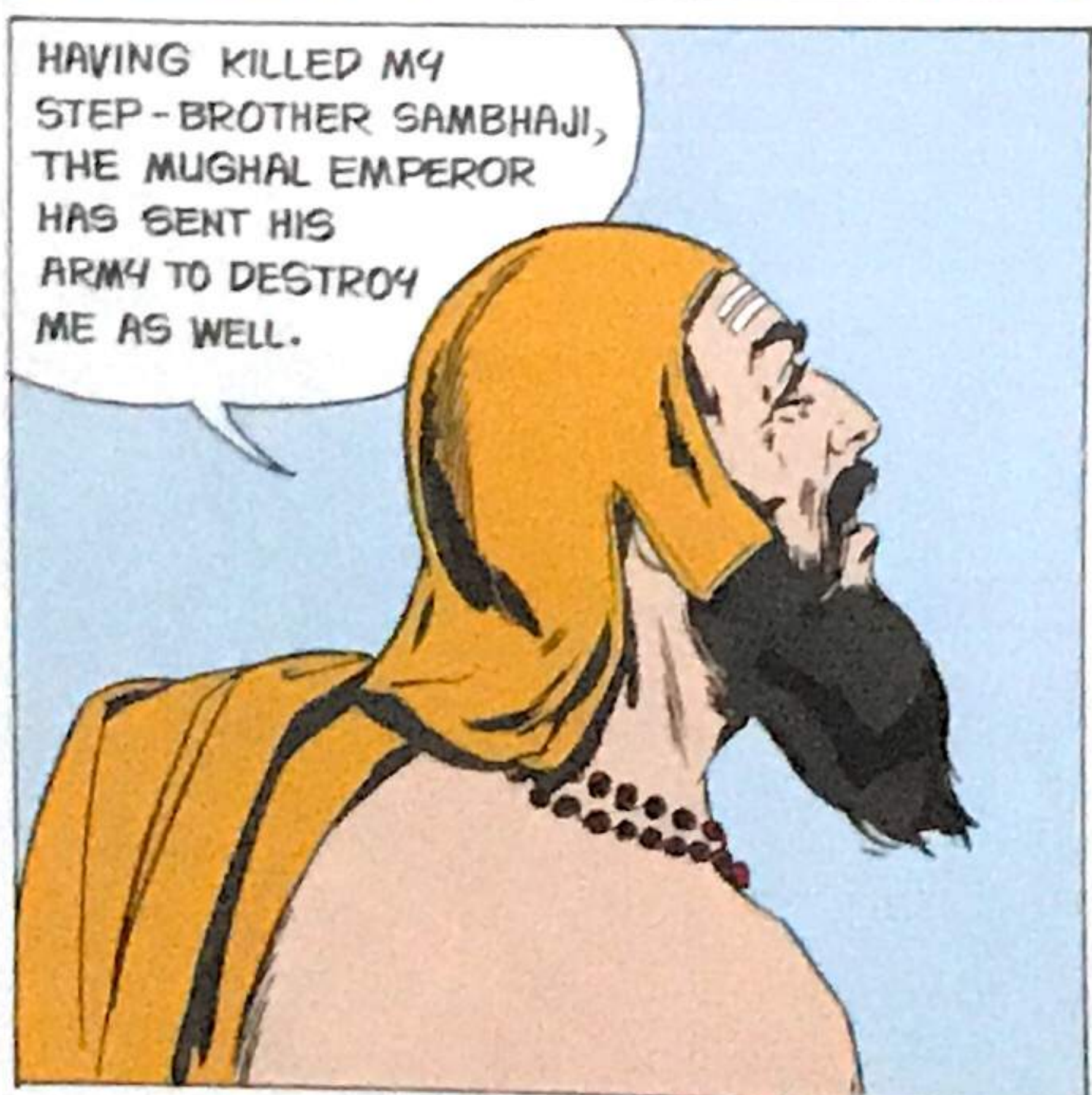
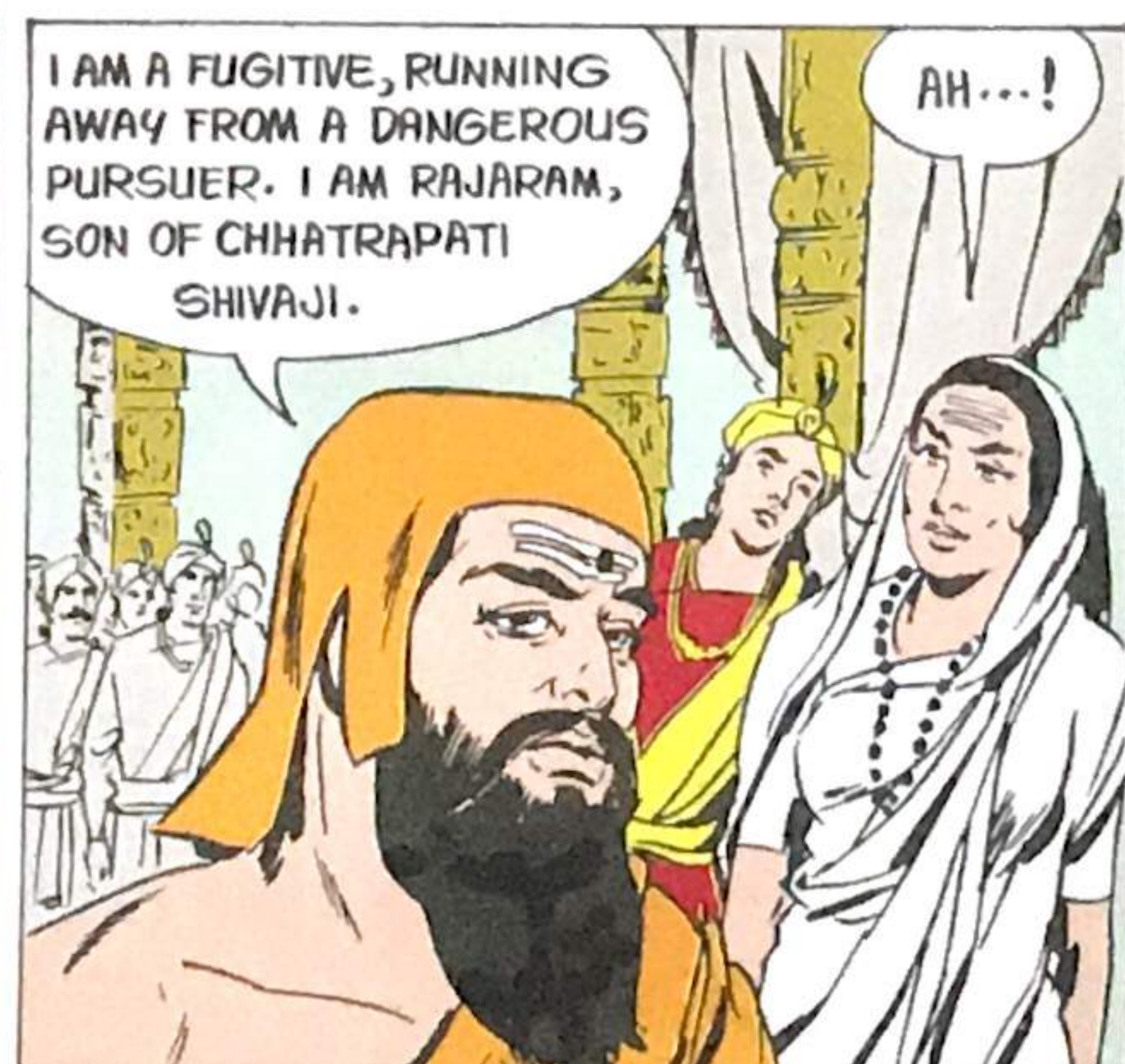
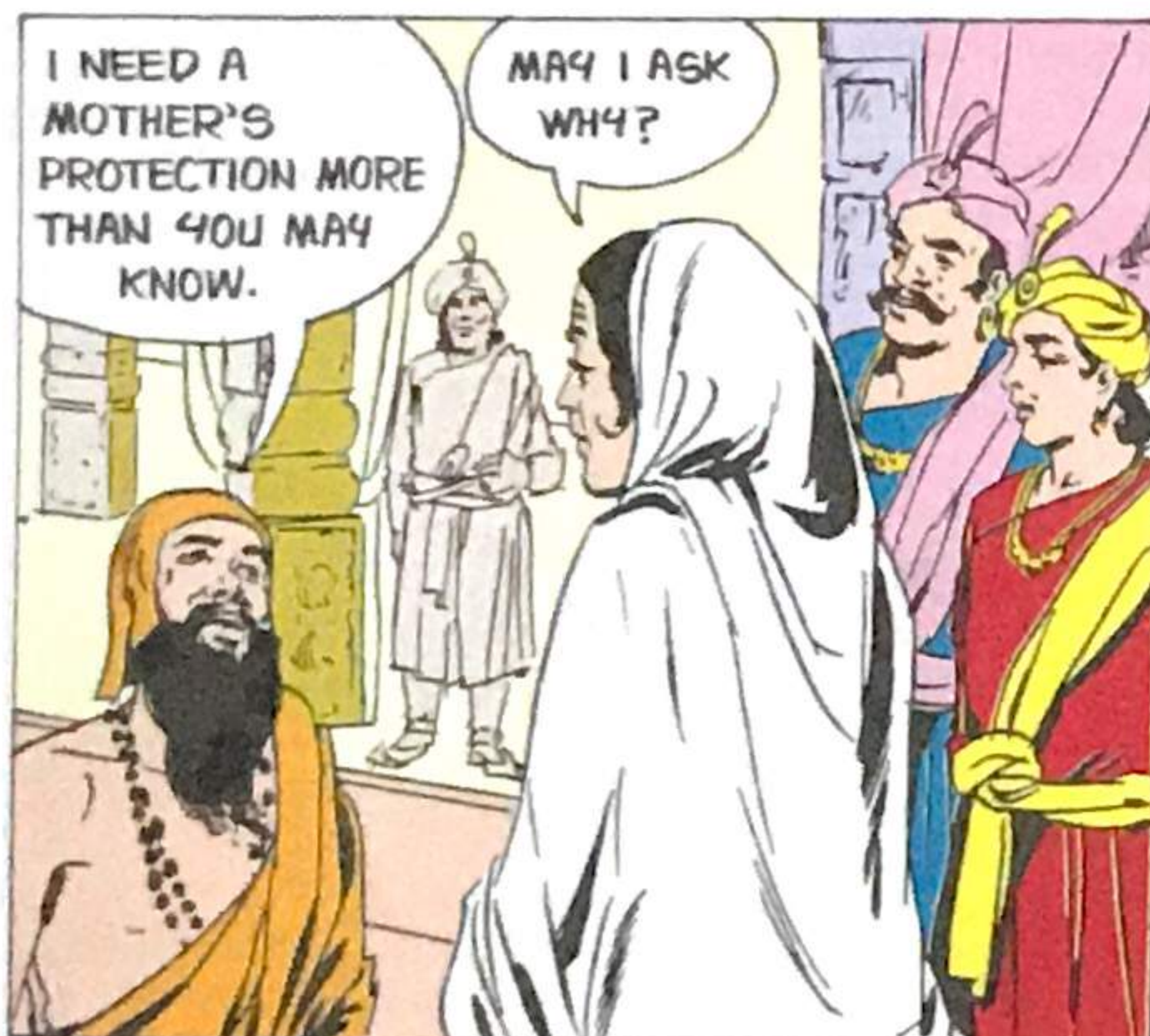
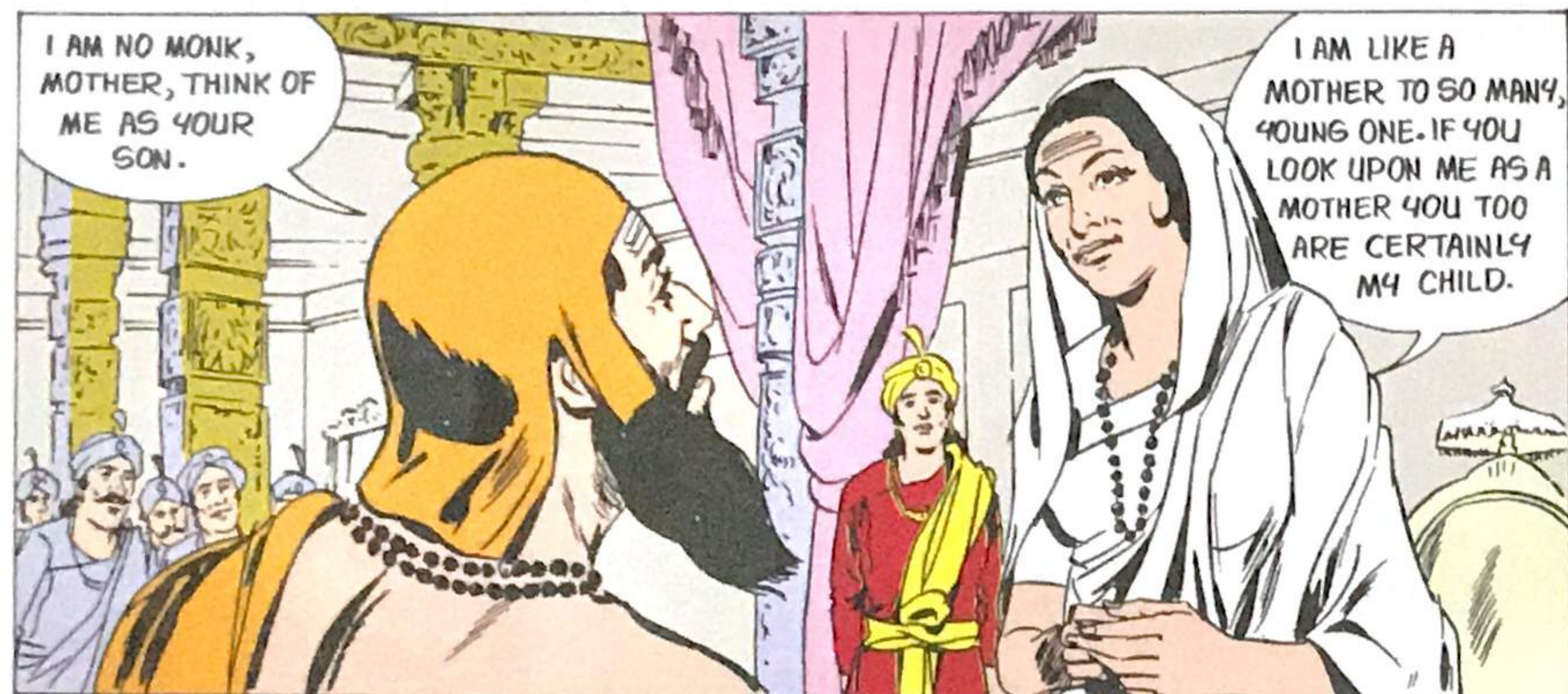
THAT MAN — THERE'S SOMETHING ABOUT HIM.

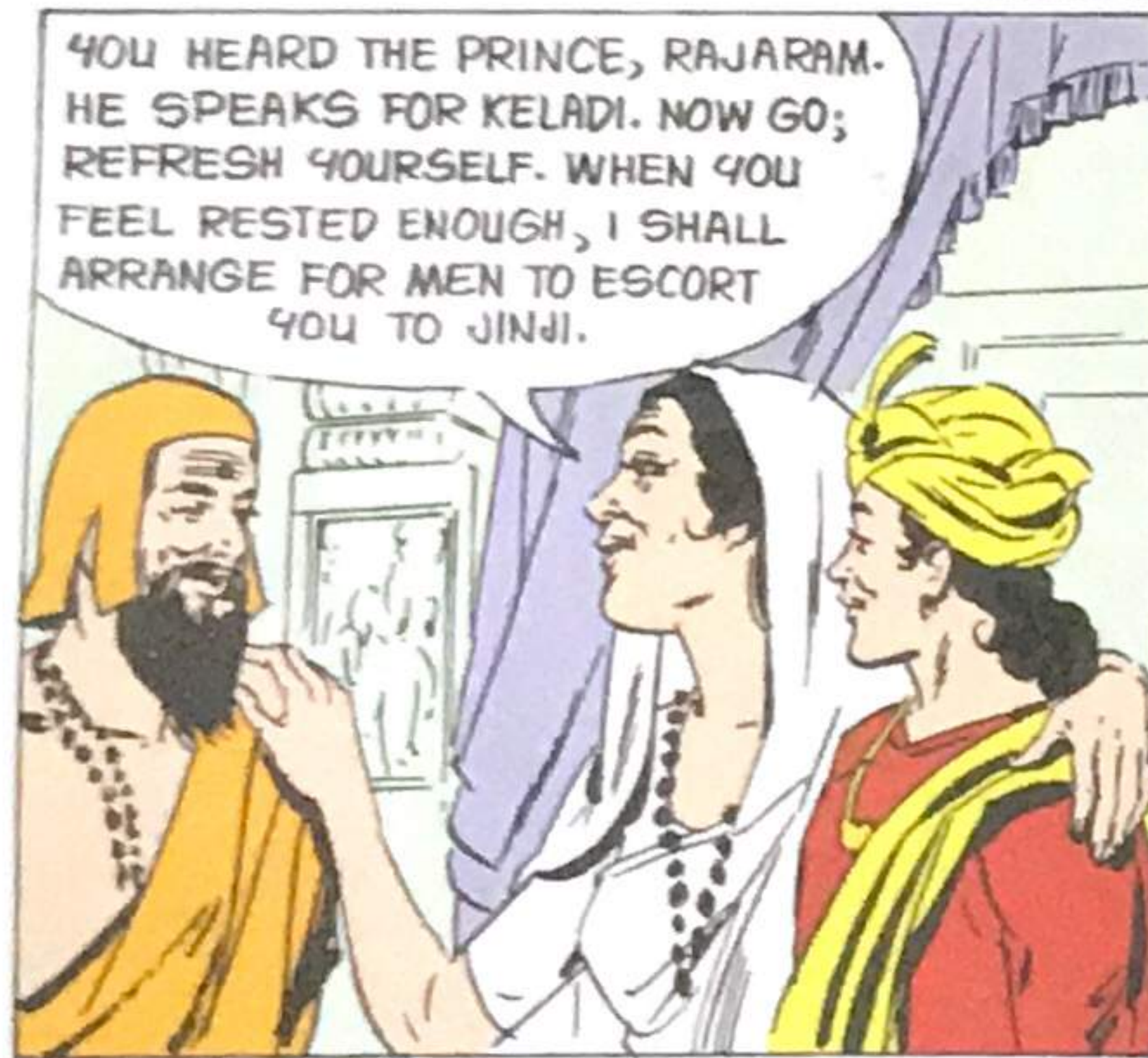


MAY GOD BLESS YOU.

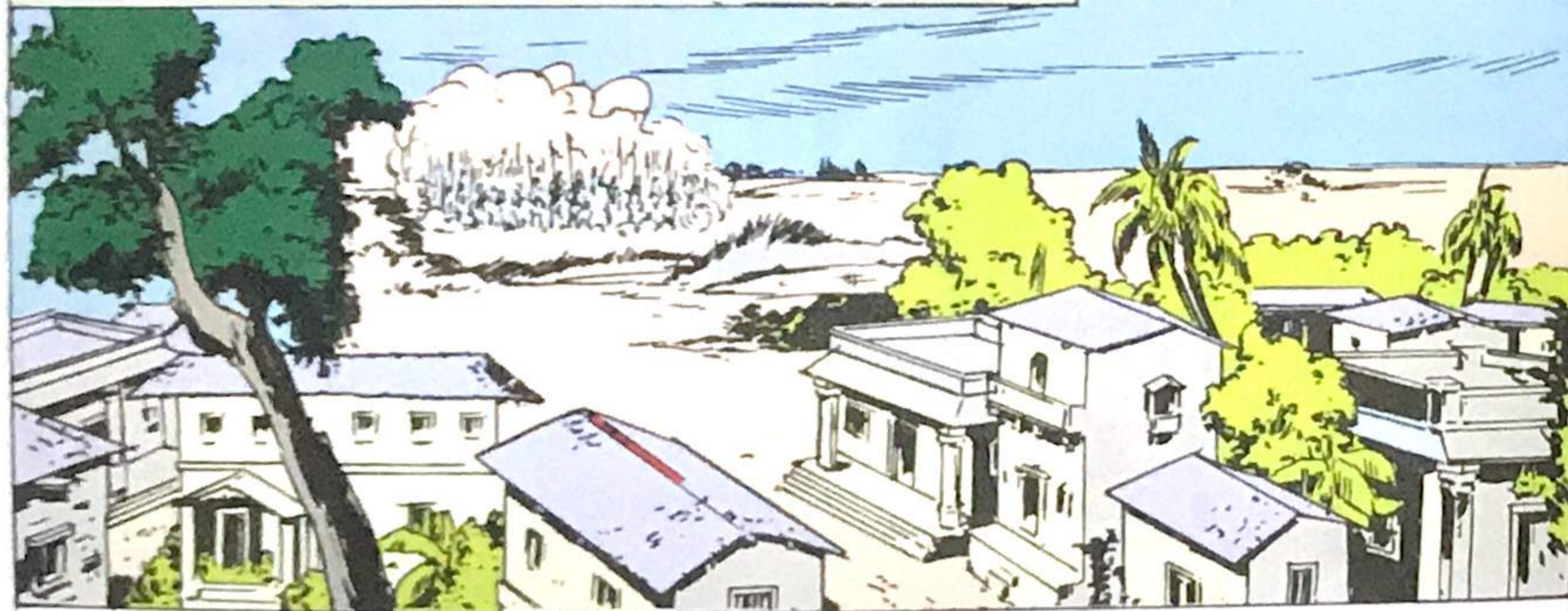
WHO ARE YOU? WHY HAVE YOU EMBRACED THE LIFE OF A MONK AT SUCH A YOUNG AGE?



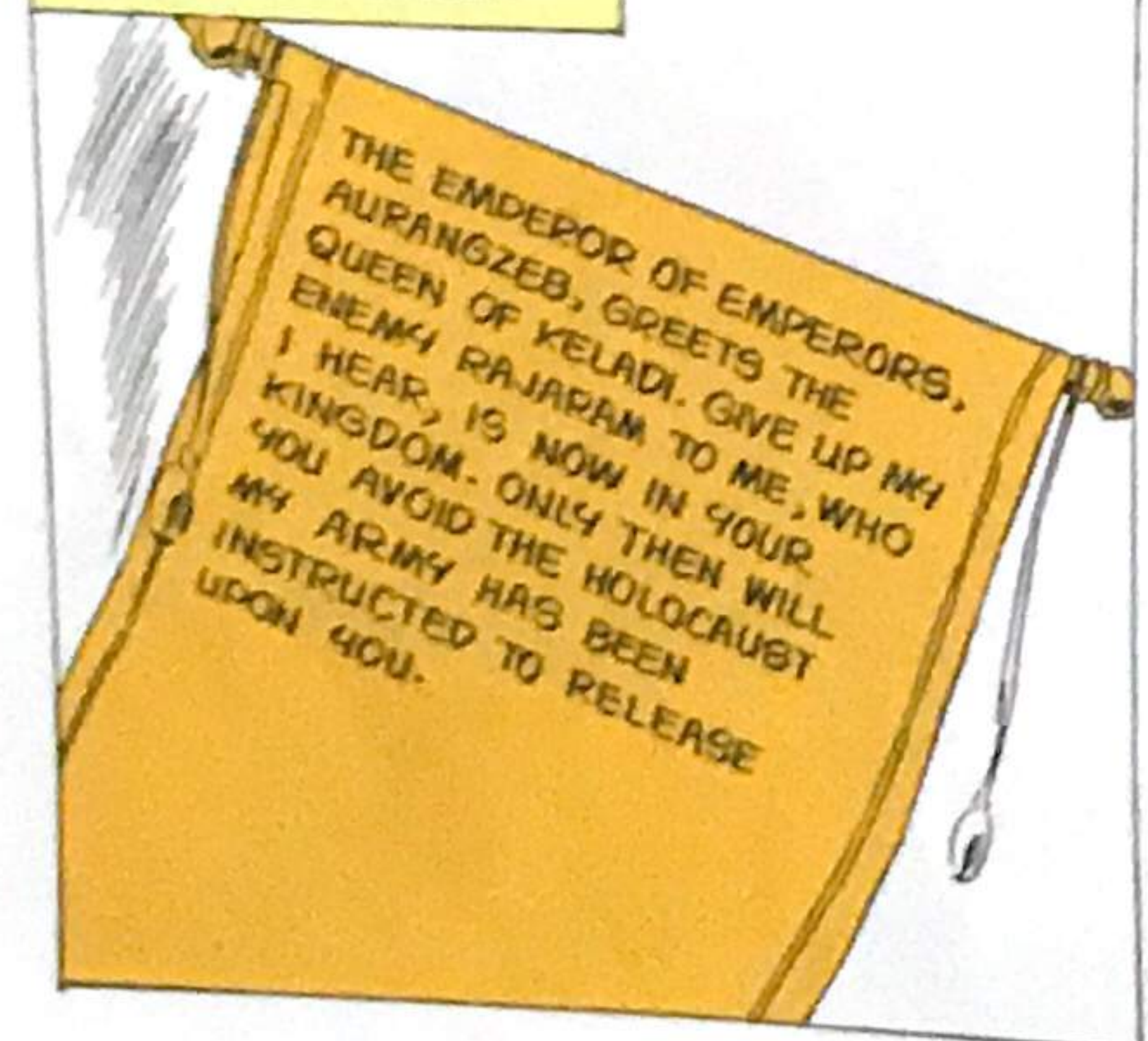




SOON, THE MUGHAL ARMY UNDER JAAN NISAR KHAN, GOT WIND OF RAJARAM'S PRESENCE IN KELADI AND IMMEDIATELY MARCHED TOWARDS ITS BORDERS.



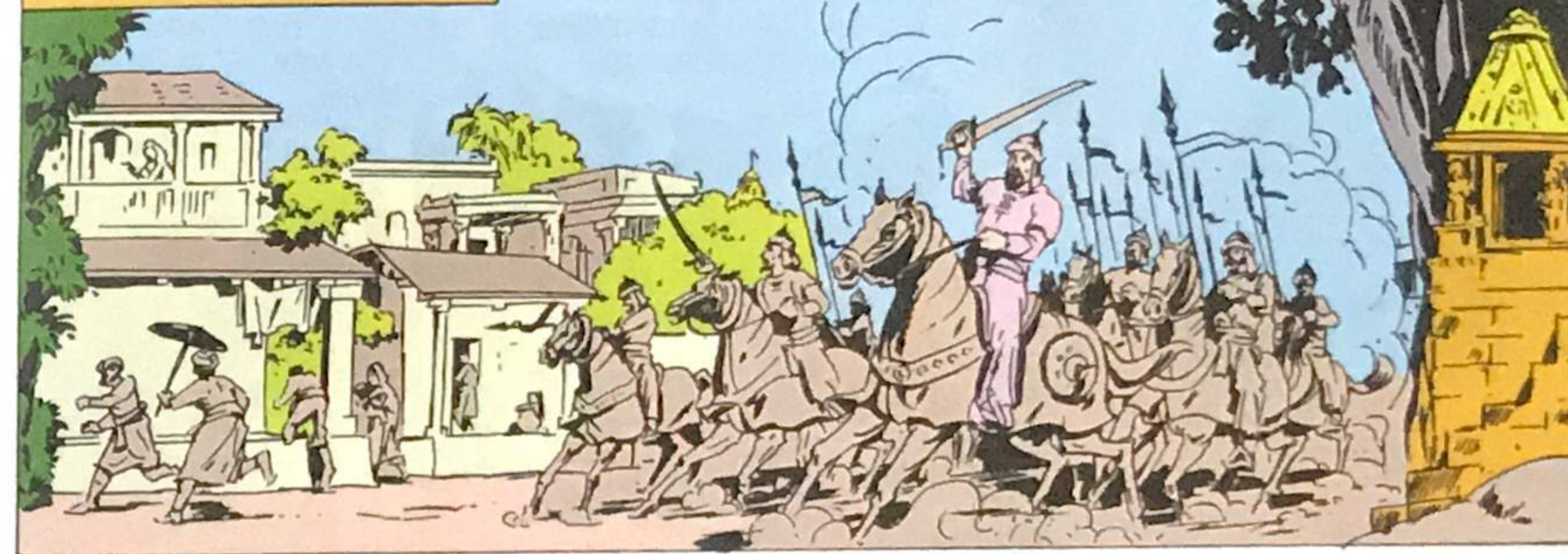
EVEN AS THE ARMY APPROACHED, CHENNAMMA RECEIVED A LETTER.



CHENNAMMA WROTE BACK.



BEFORE CHENNAMMA'S LETTER COULD REACH AURANGZEB, THE MUGHAL ARMY ATTACKED, GAINING ENTRY INTO THE KINGDOM.



ONCE THE MUGHALS WERE IN THE THICK MAZES OF THE MALENADU JUNGLES, THE KELADI SOLDIERS PUT INTO USE THEIR HIT-AND-RUN MANOEUVRES. THEY WON MANY SUCCESSES...



...BUT ALSO LOST IN MANY ENCOUNTERS.



THEN THE RAINS SET IN.



THE FORESTS, UNFAMILIAR TO JAAN NISAR KHAN AND HIS MEN, TURNED INTO SOGGY MARSHES.



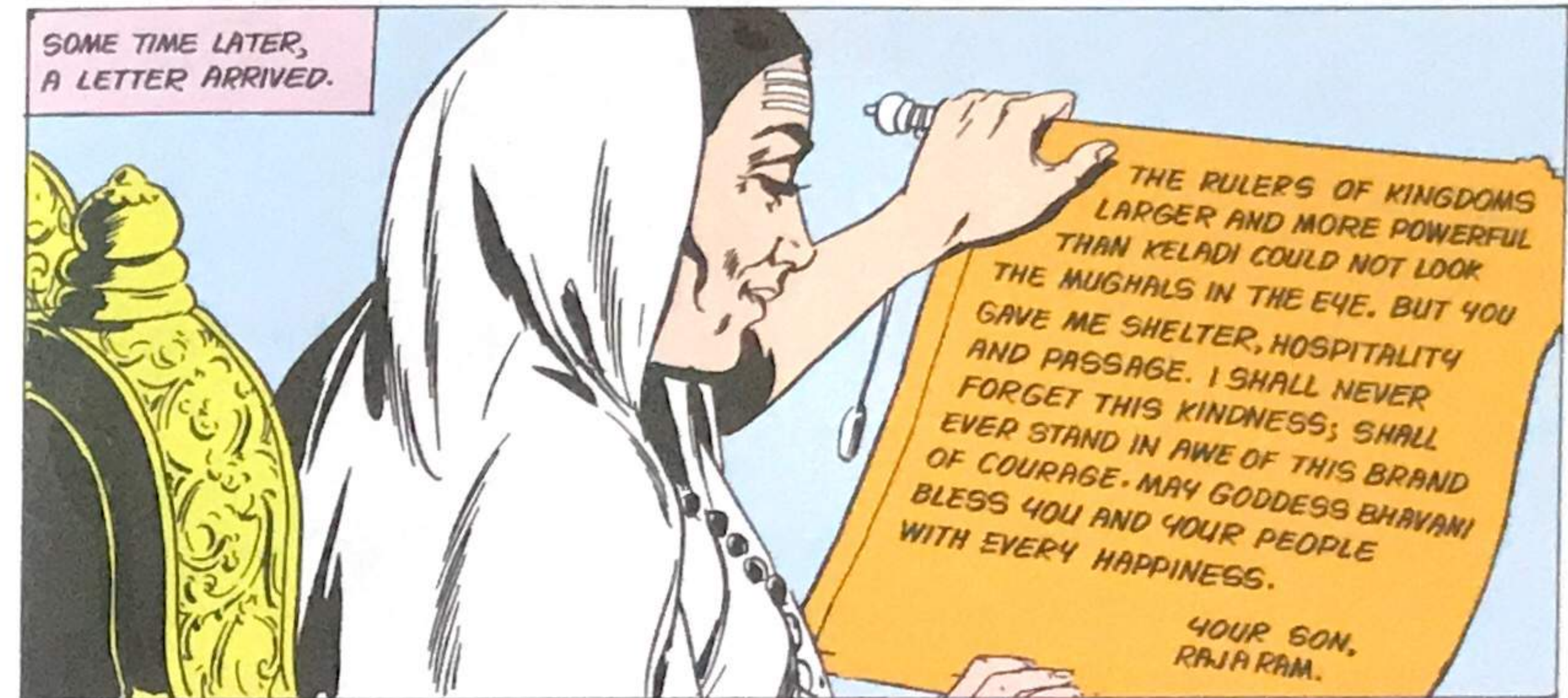
THEN CAME THE NEWS THAT RAJARAM HAD SAFELY REACHED JINJI.



BACK AT BIDANUR—



SOME TIME LATER,
A LETTER ARRIVED.



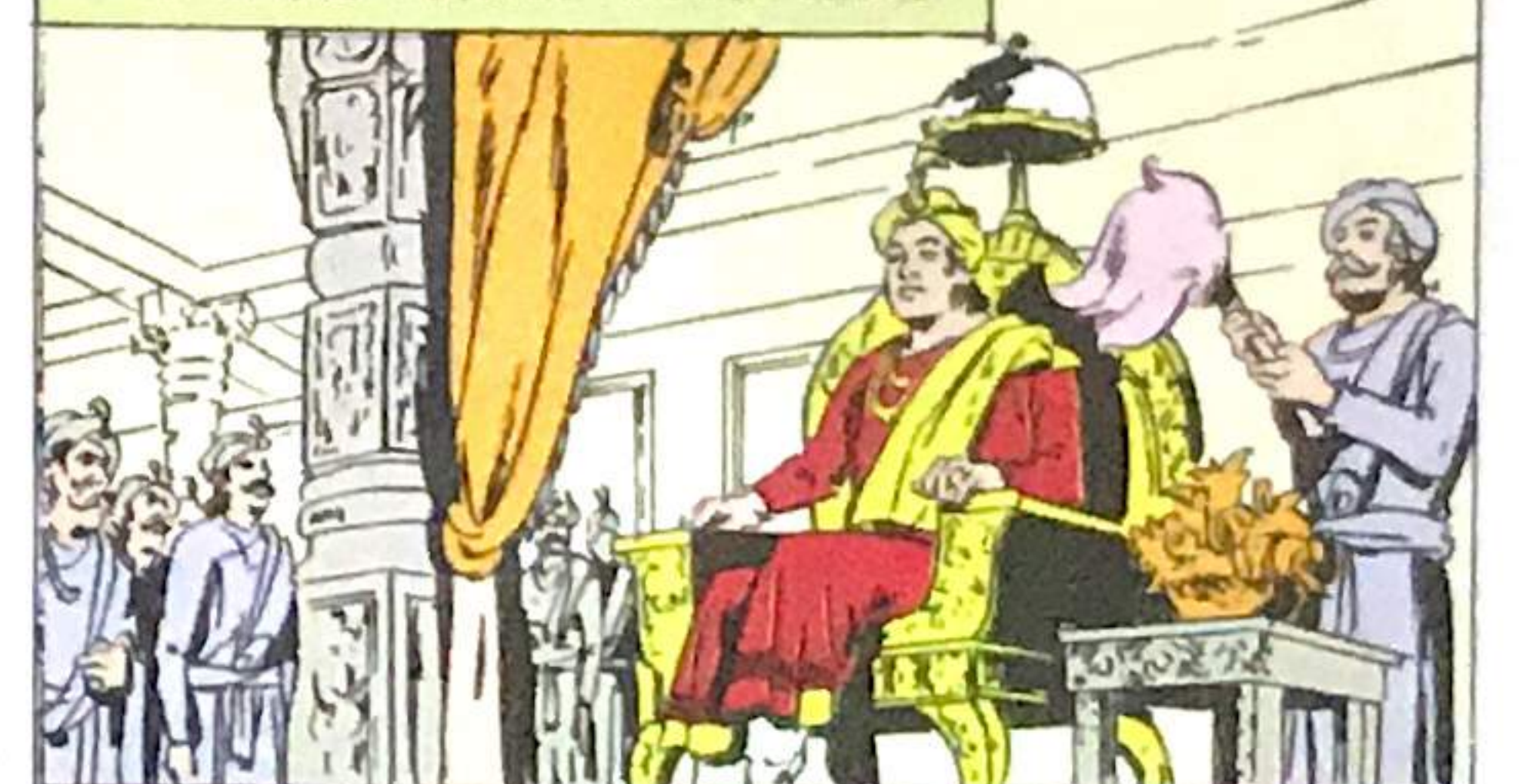
CHENNAMMA RULED FOR 25 YEARS; YEARS NOTED FOR EFFICIENT RULE, JUSTICE AND GENEROSITY. PLACES OF LEARNING AND TEMPLE TOWNS FLOURISHED DURING HER REIGN.



YOU WILL HAVE KELADI. WHAT MORE
PRECIOUS TREASURES CAN THERE BE?
YOU ARE ALREADY AN ABLE
ADMINISTRATOR. BUT I HAVE SOME
WORDS OF ADVICE. ALWAYS KEEP YOUR
WORD. BEWARE OF THOSE WHO SEEK
REFUGE. NEVER LOSE COURAGE WHEN FACED
WITH DIFFICULTIES. WORSHIP GOD AND
STRIVE TO KNOW YOURSELF



WHEN CHENNAMMA DIED, BASAVA NAYAKA CAME TO THE
THRONE AND EARNED A GOOD NAME.



TODAY, THE FORT OF CHENNAGIRI, NAMED BY BASAVA NAYAKA AFTER HIS MOTHER AND THE FINE KANNADA
WORK "SHIVATATVARATNAKARA", WRITTEN BY BASAVA,
REMAIN AS MEMORIALS OF THAT BYGONE AGE.